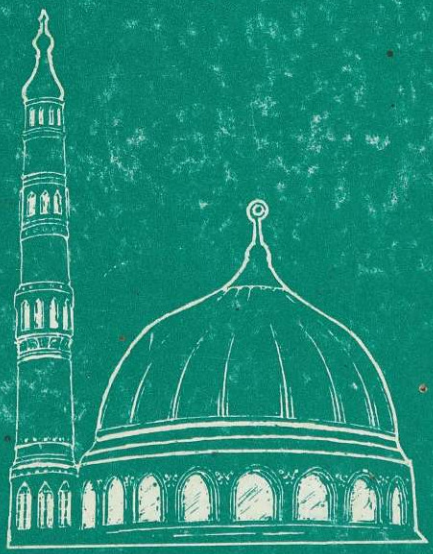
MUSLIMS OF SRI LANKA

Avenues to Antiquity



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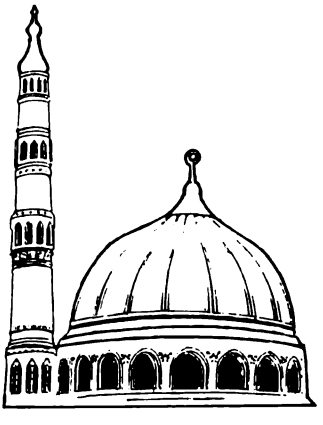

Dr. M.A.M. Shukri

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PREFACE

"Why does not a patriotic member of the large community of Moors in Ceylon write an accurate and comprehensive history of his community? . . . . . The work involves a good deal of patient research, keen interest and cool judgement, but the end will repay the labour devoted to it. There is need of an authentic history; there is plenty of material available; and the story is of romantic as well as of historical interest." That was the solicitous observation made nearly thirty five years ago by the historian L.E. Blaze.

For well over a century, both Muslims and non-Muslims of this country, have written on many aspects of the Moors of this island. But it was left to the above historian to suggest undertaking a comprehensive history of the Moors. It was a long-felt need. Many scattered writings on the Moors, a few of them of some merit have been published; but no serious attempt was made to undertake a comprehensive history of this community as envisaged by Blaze. And we deign at this stage to concur with those, who are intellectually interested in this problem, that the Five-Day Seminar/ Workshop on 'The Muslim Minorities of Sri Lanka and South and South East Asia' held in January 1984, under the aegis of the NIIR and the ICES* came well nigh to fulfil such hopes.

To delineate exclusively the Moors of this country would not amount to a history of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. For the Moors only constitute a larger segment of the Muslim community (Ummah) in this country of which either now or at various stages in the past, the Malays, Coast Moors, the Bohras, the Memons, the Khojas and Afghans, however small, have been related segments. So our initial effort to write a history of the Moors of Sri Lanka, expanded to include other segments of the Muslim community.

* NIIR (Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Research).
ICES (International Centre for Ethnic Studies).

It was the ICES and especially Prof. K. M. de Silva who persuaded us to broaden the geographical scope of the seminar to include the Muslim Minorities of South and South East Asia. This idea would be appreciated when one concedes the fact, that the story of the Muslims of this country cannot be comprehended in absolute independence of the region in which Arab and Muslim trading activities operated between Canton and the East African Coast and in which region Sri Lanka found herself centrally and strategically located. Thus the readers of this volume of papers would observe, that the Muslims of Sri Lanka, are viewed in the wider Asian perspective in which our history in this country becomes meaningful as an integral part of the ebb and flow of the currents of Asian history.

The successful conclusion of this seminar is the result of the joint efforts of the two organizations, NIIR and the ICES, which speaks in favour of the virtues of co-operation in this abrasive world. And we are sanguine, that this rapport and understanding would continue between the two centres to our mutual advantage. The papers collected in this volume had their genesis at this Seminar/Workshop, held in January 1984, at the Jamiah Naleemiah, China Fort, Beruwela, Sri Lanka.

The seminar, at which these papers were presented, discussed and examined, brought together men and women from the region of South and South East Asia in addition to interested investigators from the U.S. and Australia, who spent five pleasant January days, under the incredibly blue tropical skies and the green verdure of the Jamiah campus, exploring and analysing the subject, 'Muslim Minorities of South and South East Asia'.

In all, twenty five well-researched papers were presented at the seminar/workshop. It is with great pride and pleasure that I recall those eventful days of the seminar, as a felicitous occasion in the history of my community, as it was one of the pioneering social experiments, in which with great acumen and acuteness, attempts were made to probe the history of the Muslim Minorities of South and South East Asia, more particularly of Sri Lanka. Most of the delegates being academics, were men of the highest intellectual calibre. The papers are the result of judicious and diligent research. These papers cover a broad spectrum of views, with a wide range of differing assumptions and perspectives. They portray on a wider canvas, the fluctuating vicissitudes of initially the Arab, and after the seventh century A.D., the Muslim fortunes in the arena of South and South East Asia and the Far East. These papers may help to widen our understanding of the internal structure and the processes by which religio-ethical identities are formed, and which interact within the main polity in which they

find themselves, and with which one has to come to rational accord for survival, progress and continuity of civilized living.

Out of the twenty five Research Papers, the possibility for two or may be three publications was envisaged. Anyway, in view of the frantic calls and correspondences from scholars in Sri Lanka and abroad, the Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies Society (the governing body of the Jamiah Naleemiah), resolved that (i) those papers relating to the Muslims of Sri Lanka should be edited as a separate volume by me on behalf of the NIIR, and (ii) those papers pertaining to the Muslim Minorities of South and South East Asia may be edited as a separate volume by the ICES.

This volume consists of 18 research papers out of 25, and these 18 papers have Sri Lanka and of her Muslims as the centre of their foci. Nevertheless, the reader's mind is compelled to flit across tremendous space-time. With perceptual speed, it should move across from the island of Timor (close to Papua New Guinea) to the island of Zanzibar on the eastern coast of Africa; from the confluence of Shatt-al-Arab and Basra port to the tranquil villages of the Kandyan hills. Likewise, temporally he may have to transport himself to the pre-Islamic days and beyond to times of misty antiquity – to the age of the Vijayan legends and swiftly flash back to the 7th Parliamentary General Elections of Sri Lanka held in 1977 A.D.

This seminar extended the range of investigation from its older focus of attempting to confine our investigation to one particular segment of the Muslims such as the Moors or to limit our investigation to the confines of this country to a whole region. It has broadened the scope of our investigation to something wider and deeper and roused the interest of the future investigators.

Yet, this volume of papers, cannot pretend to be a comprehensive investigation of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. It rather offers a guide to the state of knowledge as at present and provides a basis on which the future social scientists could build, and it discloses the immense possibilities for further research. We are deeply conscious of the lacunae in this volume caused by the absence of papers on (i) Muslim Education (ii) the position of women in Sri Lankan Muslim society (iii) Muslim contribution to Art and Architecture in this country (iv) and the signal services rendered to this country and to their respective followers by the munificent leaders of the ethnocultural groups of the Muslim community (v) last but not the least, a paper on Arabic-Tamil, a dialect which was mainly Tamil with a profusion of Arabic conceptual terms, which were indispensable to convey

Islamic thoughts and feelings. And it was written in the Arabic script. It was a dialectical synthesis of Semitic Arabic and Dravidian Tamil – an ingenuity of the Moors, which remained the tool of Moorish intellectual writing and discourse from the end of the thirteenth century right up to the end of the nineteenth century. And Arabic-Tamil had its parallel in the Swahili group of languages along the East African coast. A deeper research and study of Arabic-Tamil and the immense corpus of literature that came out of it is bound to reveal much about the origin and history of the Moors of this country, at least, such was the contention of one of our foremost educationists and scholars – the late Mr. A.M.A. Azeez. So we crave the indulgence of the readers for these five deficiencies thus listed. However, we hope, God willing, to eliminate if not minimize the hiatus in this volume in a revised edition which would soon ensue. We decided to bring out this volume even before we could achieve some sort of consummation because of the persistent demand of many insatiable scholars. To withhold these papers any further would amount to imposing a high tariff on knowledge.

The papers of this volume sincerely hopes to make an effort at investigating the origin and history of the Sri Lankan Muslims. These papers cover different periods and approach the problem from different angles. Hence from them, the reader would gather a synoptic and synthetic picture, yet would experience the feeling that the last word has not been said on the problem. We wish to reiterate, that our effort, at best is a pioneering one to write a comprehensive history of our community though we fall far short of it because of obvious difficulties as are brought out in the introduction to this volume. Secondly, some of the source materials, I should say, a greater part of them – namely, the immense body of literature of the early Arab settlers in Arabic and the much later productions in Arabic-Tamil are irretrievably lost. The Moorish leaders in the past, had expressed a desire that the younger generations of this community should delve into their past and continue the initial effort made by I.L.M. Abdul Azeez. It should be borne in mind, that Mr. Azeez's contribution in this field is of a polemical nature as it arose in the course of a controversy to refute Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan's thesis* on the origin of Moors.

The term 'Muslim', denotes a religious denomination and not an ethnic, and not necessarily an ethno-cultural one, but an ethico-religious one. This

* Ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon.
Vide Article on the Moors of Ceylon by Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. Proceedings of the R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol. X No. 36 of 1888.

should be clearly grasped by the readers to avoid confusion. Conceptual clarity is vital to understand the problem we are dealing with, namely, Muslim Minorities. For instance, while all Moors are Muslims, all Muslims in this country are not Moors. Cultural variable even within a local or regional community such as the Sri Lankan Muslims is a fact, but it is glossed over even by serious-minded scholars. 'Moor', is not a synonym for 'Muslim', at least as far as Sri Lanka is concerned. There is a sizeable number of Malays, Bhoras, and Memons; and in the recent past, there were substantial number of Coast Moors, Khojas, Afghans, etc.

Methods of historical study have continued to evolve. The source materials available for research have tremendously increased and the range of technique at the historian's disposal has been extended. The combined effect has resulted in the revelation of new facts and refinements of old notions. Consequently, the aims of historians have changed, they have been, perforce to take a different look at things in the light of new discernment they have acquired. Whereas the pioneers in this field of investigation of the roots of their communities sought primarily to construct from the sources they stumbled on, historians today, are more concerned and conscious to evaluate their materials; they seek to penetrate the screens of nomenclature, dissipate naive opinions and obviate prejudices.

While it is imperative for a clear perception of the Muslims of Sri Lanka, to distinguish the many segments within this community, this analytic approach should not be permitted to obscure the fact, that as followers of one religion which is universal in its belief and ritual, all these segments in turn constitute a single Ummah in this country. Having examined them as distinct ethno-cultural groups, we have to consider them as one ethico-religious community to comprehend them at a different dimension.

At the discussions that ensued the presentation of papers at the seminar, provocative questions were followed by insightful suggestions; objective evidence from many sources were cited in support of their respective theses – all these generated an excitement which proved to be stimulating and led to a refinement of our views and to some extent even to recasting of our perceptions of the origin and history of the Muslims of Lanka.

On one thing, there was consensus, at least, among my colleagues at the Jamiah. Among us, was a feeling of exhilaration not so much for what had been achieved, but for what was attempted. Though this is the first

serious concerted attempt, at a very high altitude of intellectual probe to monitor the isolated researches and speculations of social scientists on the avenues to antiquity of the Muslims of this country, the workshop discussions raised more questions than it answered. It became notable not for what it said, but, for what it did not say. In other words, it revealed our impressionist image of the problem and held out immense vistas for inquiring minds to reconstruct the fascinating story of the Muslims of this island home of ours. People envisage the future by interpreting the present with reference to the past, so let us look back in order to look forward.

I should like to take this opportunity to place on record my deep sense of gratitude and thanks to the ICES and specially to Prof. K. M. de Silva as this volume is the collaborative outcome of the seminar and workshop organised by the ICES and the NIIR. I am grateful indeed to every one of the eighteen participants who took special effort to prepare the research papers which are brought together in this volume. Their diligent research combined with their academic background and scholarship make the dissertations stimulating reading.

I am also thankful to the Sri Lanka National Archives, for most of the information on the subject that were collected by the NIIR, some of which have been incorporated in the Introduction to this volume. I wish to thank Dr. M. Ali Kittani and my teacher Prof. W. Montgomery Watt of the University of Edinburgh for the frequent recourse to their respective works such as, The Muslim Minorities 1979 Lond., and What is Islam 1968 Lond. To this volume is appended 'A guide to Researchers on the Muslims of Sri Lanka,' prepared by Mr. Fazal Davood of the ICES, which should prove, really useful.

It is a pleasure, to acknowledge the debt I owe to the fruitful discussions I had with the chief librarian of the Jamiah Mr. A. R. A. Noor Amin and the Dean of Academic Affairs Moulvi Shahidulla Kausar and the unstinted co-operation they extended to me in the course of the seminar. One person who unsparingly exerted himself as liaison between the two institutions that organized the seminar was Mr. A. J. M. Zaneer to whom is due my deep appreciation and thanks.

Last, but not the least, is the patron and life-president of the Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies Society, Mr. M. I. M. Naleem, whose munifi-

cence, patronage and encouragement, was a source of hope and inspiration which made possible the successful conclusion of the seminar and the publication of this volume of papers entitled 'MUSLIMS OF SRI LANKA'.

Dr. M. A. M. Shukri, B.A. (Hons.) Phd. (Edin.)

Friday, 7 Feb. 1986
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INTRODUCTION

This volume is based on the studied presentation of dissertations mostly by academics, pertaining to the Muslims of Sri Lanka. These incisive and illuminating research monographs, results of painstaking effort, were in fact, presented at the Cross-Cultural Seminar/Workshop, held on the theme 'Muslim Minorities of South and South East Asia' in January 1984, under the aegis of the Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies. The Seminar itself was organized by the Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Research (NIIR) – an allied agency of the above Society – in collaboration with the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and was held at the Jamiah Naleemiah, at Beruwela, in Sri Lanka.

Many factors favoured to maintain the Seminar theses at a high altitude of academic finesse and scientific objectivity. Almost all the participants were experienced University dons of academic distinctions in their respective fields of study and investigations. So the best possible authorities were pressed in the service of the Seminar. They represent many disciplines such as Economics, History, Law, Sociology, Education, Arabic etc.; hence an inter-disciplinary approach to the subject was assured. As the Seminar papers reveal this many-pronged approach to the subject, resulted in the enrichment of the investigations and observations of this field of study which the Seminar set out to examine. This approach besides focusing attention on multifarious aspects, on a much broader perspective, held out a much deeper and richer Islamic vision of human geography of this part of the world, in which the Sri Lankan Muslims have come to occupy the position as they do. It was also our good fortune that most participants were non-Muslims. Hence, most of these remarkably perceptive contributions cannot be indicted of sympathetic and subjective distortions, which would otherwise have been if the participants were exclusive adherents of the Islamic faith. Hence, the appeal, in the course of the examination of this theme at the Seminar, has been to reason; reason unclouded

by passion and prejudice – to scrutinize the origin and history, cultural life and socio-economic realities of the Muslim minorities of this region. Though the Seminar covered the entire region of South and South East Asia, this volume purports to edit only those papers relating to the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

Under the harsh and cruel conditions of the desert, group feeling was vital for survival. Such consanguinities commencing with the family (USURA) and widening to embrace the clan (QAWM) eventually expanded to group solidarity of the tribe (KABEELA) as ASABIYYA. As in the Arab tribe, the new community of Islam made it obligatory upon its adherents for the defence of the whole community (UMMAH). Thus the boundaries of the new tribe was religious and spiritual rather than genealogical or ethnical and eventually the Prophet's Daar'ul Islam – abode of Islam, became a haven of peace which extended protection to the life, liberty and property of even the followers of other faiths living in it. In this context, it may be interesting to note that William R. Polk observes*, that the Arabic word for the sentiment which bound together the clan is the same as the modern word for Nationalism – QAWMIYAH. In fact in Arabic, there is no word for NATION. When the Arabs were almost on the verge of achieving nationhood, there was revealed a religion which addressed itself not to a tribe, or nation, but to entire mankind.

As in Sri Lanka so in the world, Muslims are almost ubiquitous, and (Dar-al-Islam) the Muslim world, straddles mountains, deserts and oceans. Albeit, the Muslims constitute an ethnic compendium of cultural diversity, yet, the Muslim community (UMMAH) has an electrifying unity. The cardinal lineaments of such a unity are ingrained in the Islamic concept of DIVINE UNITY (TAWHEED) which simply means LA ILAHA ILLALLAH – there is no God but Allah. Almost as a corollary to this concept is the Apostleship of the Prophet and the Vicegerency (KHILAFAH) of man. Another practical aspect of the doctrine of Divine Unity, is the unity of the human race. 'One God' has its corresponding parallel in "one humanity". The Holy Quran reveals a God, who was not, the God of a particular nation, but was Rabb-ul-alamin – the Lord of all the worlds. As God was one, so was humanity one. "All people are a single nation" (2: 213); "and people are naught but a single nation" (10:19) was the message of the new revelation.

* The Arab World, Polk, William R., Harvard Uty. Press, 1980.

This great thought and feeling of belonging to one humankind engendered by the Quran and inculcated in every Muslim, also created an all-embracing camaraderie amongst the followers of the Prophet, who are bound to one another by the five pillars of Islam. Muslims must testify that "there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger." He must pray, according to a prescribed form, five times daily. He must fast from dawn to sunset, a whole specified month, every lunar year. He must give alms to the poor if his wealth or his income is within prescribed limits. He must visit Mecca at least once in his lifetime, if his circumstances and wealth permit.

Such a placid and limpid frame of reference imparts to every Muslim, almost a gyroscopic balance of belonging to one human kind and within it cohesively integrated to the Muslim Fraternity. This awareness and feeling, in no way impairs one's close sanguinity to family, clan tribe and nation. In fact, such parochial consanguinities were only sublimated to higher ideals such as the Community (UMMAH) and Humanity (INSANIYAT).* Asabiyya, in a sociological sense had some relevance in the days of Jahiliyya, when social evolution from family to clan and then on to the tribe had reached maturity. But Asabiyya had no validity whatsoever, when the Prophet elevated the Arabs from the tribal to the larger and still higher level of the Community (the UMMAH). And one of the fundamental implications that inexorably flows from the conception of Divine Unity (TAWHEED) is the unity of humankind. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the Arabs used the concept of ASABIYYA to signify dynamic leadership coupled with economic cohesion in a tribe or group and to indicate unity of purpose and emphasize singleness of thought and action. It was a contrivance of offence and defence and it motivated the Arabs to maintain group solidarity.** But, it turned out to be sanguinary and gruesome in its consequences, hence, it was considered to be a bane of society in the days of JAHILIYYA. Hence, the new faith, revolted against this concept of ASABIYYA. This abrogation of Asabiyya in its bigotrous and outlandish form was one of the major revolutionary changes introduced by Islam.*** The basic notion of justice was contradicted by pre-Islamic Asabiyya. According to Quranic injunction, Muslims are only to fight for causes which are just. Asabiyya demanded undeviating loyalty from the members to a group on issues relating to war and peace. There is no scope for uncritical thought or blind faith in Islam.****

* Polk. William R. op. cit.
** Intellectual Foundations of Muslim Civilization, Saukat Ali, Lahore, 1977.
*** Polk op. cit. Ch. 2 & 3.
**** Maqaddima Vol. I – Ibn Khaldun.

Because of this concept of Asabiyya, the pre-Islamic Arabs evinced much interest in genealogy. In fact, it was not uncommon for most of them to trace their origin, finally to Adam.

The lineal descendancy of the Prophet from Ishmael was never in doubt. The Arabs took great felicity in their ancient and noble past. This penchant for genealogy imbued them with an obsession for Asabiyya.*

Post-Islam, with the prophetic denunciation of Asabiyya, Arabs developed a great sense of history. And amongst them arose biographists like ibn Ishak and ibn Hisham and Tabari and historians like Masudi, Muqadassi, al-Beruni; biographical encyclopaedist like ibn Khallikan and when the world of Islam (Darul Islam) assumed global proportions, universal historians like ibn Khaldun emerged on the scene. Besides the ancient Greeks, and to a lesser extent the Romans, the Arabs had an avid feeling for their origins and hence a sense of history. Consequently, there ensued a plethora of genealogists, biographers, chroniclers, annalists, historians and historiographers and encyclopaedists. This cultural trait percolated to the entire Muslim world which began to emulate the Arabs.

It is, we should say, mainly because of this cultural trait that there was a relentless urge amongst the Muslims of Sri Lanka to record their history. Hitherto, many individuals both Muslims and non-Muslims motivated either by intellectual curiosity or through religious fervour investigated very many aspects of the Muslims of this country, and the results of their endeavours appeared in the proceedings of the learned societies, in the form of books, booklets, tracts and essays in newspapers and journals of the day.** The Ceylon Almanac, Ceylon Government Gazette, Ferguson's Directory give information of public appointments held by Muslims of this country and a list of those in the learned professions. But the bulk of the information about the Muslims, especially of the Moors in the early periods were in Arabic, Arabic-Tamil and Tamil, which were not accessible to most scholars whose exclusive sources were English, Portuguese and Dutch in English translations.*** As the Copyright Ordinance of 1925, possibly could not be retrospective in its effect, immense volume of literature especially those prior to 1925 never reached the Registrar of Books

* Vide Infra Asabiyya — Its meaning and purpose — ibn Khalduun.

** A Bibliography of published works on Muslims is appended.

*** Much information about the Muslims especially the Moors and Malays are also found in Govt. Agents' and Asst. Govt. Agents' diaries.
Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners for Kandy; and
Proceedings of the Judicial Commissioners for Kandy.

and Newspapers of the Ceylon National Archives. The NIIR of the Jamiah Naleemiah is making all efforts to trace the existence of this literature ante-1925 mainly in Tamil, Arabic-Tamil and Arabic, pertaining to the cultural activities of the Muslims of Sri Lanka which are found scattered and in a disintegrating state in individual collections. This rescue effort, we feel is worth the labour, time and money as they are bound to shed new light and enable the future generations to view their past from different perspectives. In this connection, we very much appreciate the keen interest evinced by the Ceylon National Library Services Board to collect and preserve such information. Researchers of the NIIR have stumbled on a wealth of information especially on the Ceylon Moors, Malays, Afghans and Coast Moors in unpublished records, preserved in the Record Rooms of the National Archives of this country.*

* * *

The island of Sri Lanka which nestles in the Indian ocean to the south of Kanya Kumari was the exclusive habitat of the Vaeddhas until the advent of the Sinhala branch of the Vedic Aryans, and the Dravidians, from the North and South of the sub-continent respectively. 'The whole country was our's until the Sinhalese came' was the proud assertion of the Vaeddhas (Parker, 1909). Since then, the Vaeddhas, the Sinhalese, and Tamils have been considered the primary 'races' of this island.**

Though monks and scholars, pilgrims and soldiers, traders and travellers frequented this country from China and Rome, Arabia and Persia, the island's human geography, remained preponderantly Aryan with the progressive dominance of the Sinhalese who either absorbed or dispossessed the Vaeddhas, and the Tamils who eventually concentrated mainly in the Northern Peninsula. At the commencement of the 16th century, the Moors were found to be well entrenched along the port-towns of Ceylon especially along the western littoral. Hence, the ethnic picture of this country remained simple, clear and uncomplicated until the commencement of European activities in Asia and the Far East. At the time of the advent of the Europeans, by and large, all Aryans in Sri Lanka were Sinhala Buddhists, as all Dravidians were mainly Tamil Hindus, and all the Vaeddhas who resisted Sinhalisation continued to use their own dialect, however rudimentary and primitive and followed a way of life in which their religion was compounded of animism and ancestor worship. And all Moors were Muslims.

* Some of this information is appropriately incorporated in this volume.

** The Physical Anthropology of Ceylon. Stoudt, Horward W. 1961 Government Press, Colombo, Ch. 1 – p. 4.

"Long before the days of the Prophet, the Arabs had made settlements along the trade routes between the Red Sea and China. Islam gave a new impetus to their shipping. In the 8th century, they were sufficiently numerous in South China to sack Canton. In the 9th century, there were small communities of Mohammedan merchants in several ports on the route to China."* Hence, Sri Lanka was not unknown to the pre-Islamic Arabs prior to the 6th century A.D. In fact, there was commercial relationship between Arabia and China before the birth of Islam. This contact was both oceanic and overland via the Silk route.**

"There is a long history of contact with Ceylon on the part of the Arab traders, going back to dry zone civilization, and it seems clear that communities of them gathered in seaports and elsewhere. In due course, the visiting Arabs had become Muslims. . ."*** And as nautical techniques were utilized to exploit the monsoons for oceanic traffic and Ceylon itself being a haven in times of foul weather, the island assumed unusual significance and her precious stones, pearls, spices, and other items of merchandise made Arab visits regular. This commercial intercourse of Arabs burst into activity after Islam under the Caliphate. Arab trading settlements along the coast of the Sub-Continent, Far Eastern Archipelagos and China preceded the 6th century. And that by the 7th century, such settlements had made their appearance even in Sri Lanka is manifestly clear from the incident related by Al-Baladhuri.**** So between the 7th century and the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century, the Arabs were well established and in control of the island's trade.***** The progeny of the early Arabs had consolidated their position in practically most coastal towns on the western sea board and had subsequently, penetrated to the interior of the Kandyan Kingdom dominating the internal and external trade of the country towards the end of the 15th century. This is confirmed by the increasing references to Sri Lanka in the memoirs, diaries and records of Arab pilgrims, traders and scholars such as Sulaiman Tajir (visited Ceylon about 850 A.D.), Abu Zaid As-Sirafi (visited Ceylon in 900 A.D.) and Al-Masudi (died 956 A.D.), Ibn Batuta (1342 visited Ceylon) and Arab Geographers Al-Isthakari (died 950 A.D.), Ibn Hawqal (997 A.D.) and Al-Maqdisi (985 A.D.). And Al-

* A History of South East Asia — Hall, D.G.E. 3rd Edition — Macmillan 1970.

** Sulaiman Nadvi, Arab Navigation, Delhi 1942 — pp. 42—45.

*** Ceylon — A Divided Nation — B. H. Farmer, ch. ii Oxford Uty. Press, Lond. 1963.

**** Al-Baladhuri — Futuh al Buldan — Cairo 1935 — p. 423.

***** V. L. B. Mendis — Foreign Relations of Sri Lanka — Tisara Publishers, Sri Lanka, 1983 — p. 217.

Hamdani of the 10th century refers to Sri Lanka in his work. Details of these records are brought out in the Seminar papers of this volume.

The 16th century heralds the beginning of Western rule with the arrival of the Portuguese in the island in 1505, followed by the Dutch (1658–1796) and then the British (1796–1948). With this turn of events of European activities, the ethnic and cultural scenario in this country begins to take a colourful appearance. Not only did the Europeans bring new ethnic groups such as the Malays and the Kaffirs, but they themselves left behind their descendants who were designated the Portuguese and Dutch Burghers and the English settlers in the planting community, who left an indelible impress of their respective forms of Christianity, language, and ways of life. Large numbers of Sinhalese and Tamils came to be converted to many variants of Christianity. Thus amongst us today, is a sizeable Christian community numbering a little over a million who were not there prior to 1505. The picture of human geography of this country was becoming variegated and interesting, though more complex. It began to undergo further changes under the British rule. With the opening up of the hill country, there was a massive import of South Indian labour, who were all Dravidian and Hindu. At the time of the arrival of Soulbury Commission, they numbered nearly 800,000.

With the consolidation of the British rule in the sub-continent, Burma and Ceylon, people of this entire region became British subjects. And there was an influx of other communities into Ceylon who brought in capital, expertise, knowledge and skill and the supporting services for the economic development of Sri Lanka. The inflow of Coast Moors from India increased. In addition to plantation labour, the Chettiars and Bharatas moved in from South India, then came the South Indian Christian preachers and Kerala teachers; from North India arrived the Memons, the Bhoras, Khojas, Sindhis and Parsees who initially constituted the business community of this country. Then there were the money lending 'Afghans' from Baluchistan and the Chinese from Hong Kong and Singapore, who came as hoteliers, pedlars, drapers and dental mechanics. The simplicity of the ethnic picture of Sri Lanka was no more. In addition to the already existing "primary races", were added three more who came to be referred to as "secondary races".* They are the Moors, Malays and the Burghers. These three groups are referred to as 'secondary races' because of their much more limited number and role in the human geography of the island than in a derogatory sense.**

* Stoudt, Horward, W. op cit.
** Ibid.

Sri Lanka, from its ethnic singularity in pre-Vijayan times, with her autochthonous people, the Vaeddhas, became multi-ethnic with the arrival of Sinhala Aryans and Tamil Dravidians from the North and South of India respectively. With the revelation of the Quran; and the spread of Islam by colonization and conquest, commerce and conversion, Sri Lanka could not remain uninfluenced and Arab settlements which had already emerged around the island* before the birth of the Prophet were Islamized after the 7th century, and with trade and goodwill, Muslims began to move even into the interior of the country long before the arrival of the Portuguese. This added a new note to the ethnic contours of the island. European activities in Asia and in the Far East scrutinized with great acumen and acuteness in the seminar papers especially by Drs. Sirima Kiribamune, C. R. de Silva, Karl Gunawardena and K. Indrapala, discloses the Kaleidoscopic ethnic sinuosities of this region which eventually made this country an ethnic compendium and Colombo, one of the unique cosmopolitan centres in Asia. These papers further reveal that despite ethnic and cultural differences almost all of them as Muslims were dominant at a stage in the oceanic entrepot trade in this vast region fanning out between Canton and the East Coast of Africa. And without religious fanaticism or economic rapaciousness, Muslims were predominant in the economic life of Sri Lanka prior to the advent of the Westerners." . . . . Moorish community was undoubtedly both prosperous and powerful during the period of chaos and disintegration that overtook the Sinhalese civilization after the drift to the South West in the Wet Zone...."** And a stiff competition ensued between the Sinhala kings and the Tamil power in Jaffna. Towards the end of the 13th century, of the Sri Lankan items in trade, cinnamon and pearls were the most sought-after of which Arya Chakravarto of Jaffna was covetous. In this tussle, Muslims became the natural allies of the Sinhala kings.*** It is in the context of this Sinhala-Muslim accord that the diplomatic mission of Bhuvanaikebahu I to Egypt came to be led by Abu Uthman on behalf of the king. This diplomatic message, **inter alia**, cites a list of items in which the island was capable of trading and invites the Sultan to send an ambassador to Sri Lanka. Muslims, during this period, were so influential and dominant that Emerson Tennent**** goes so far as to assert that "But for the timely appearance of a Christian power in the island, instead of being a possession of the British Crown might at present day (1859) have been a Mahometan Kingdom under the rule of some Arabian adventurer."

* History of Ceylon – Sir Emerson Tennent. Lond. Longmans 1889.
** op. cit. B. H. Farmer.

*** op. cit. V. L. B. Mendis – p. 199.
**** Tennent, op. cit. vol. i, p. 669.

Amongst the Muslims of Sri Lanka, though the Moors and Malays were numerically significant, they were not the exclusive ethno-cultural groups subsumed under the religious denomination of 'Muslims'. There were besides, the Coast Moors, Bhoras, Memons, Khojas, Sindhis, Afghans, etc. who played significant roles in the economic life of the people, imparted colour and animation to social life, and took an active interest in the cultural life of this country.

* * *

The image of Islam evolved by Europe as it came in contact with it in the 12th and 13th centuries was one of hostility and this prejudice persisted down to the 20th century. This jaundiced view of Islam and the distorted picture of the Prophet formed by an emerging Europe was to do much damage, as Europe consequent to the renaissance and industrial revolution became globally dominant, spreading around the world and carrying with it, a sense of deep-seated and morbid hostility to Islam which was even purveyed amongst their non-Christian subject people all the world over. Thus an European prejudice became a world prejudice. And it became a tremendous task for an inquiring mind to approach Islam or its Prophet without an aversion. It was possible for objective scholars to minimise this prejudice, but it could not be eliminated altogether. This spurious view of Islam and myopic view of the Prophet initially of European and Christian origin came to be proliferated even amongst the Afro-Asian nations to cause discord among these people. In this regard, it will be quite appropriate to quote one of the greatest orientalists, who observes thus: "The difficulty is that we are heirs of a deep-seated prejudice which goes back to the 'war propaganda' of medieval times. This is now coming to be widely recognized, and recent studies have indicated the steps in the formation of the European image of Islam and the motives underlying the selection of points for special emphasis. From about the 8th century A. D., Christian Europe began to be conscious of Islam as her great enemy, threatening her both in military and spiritual spheres. In deadly fear, Christendom had to bolster confidence by placing the enemy in the most unfavourable light possible, consistent with some genuine basis in fact. The image created in the 12th and 13th centuries continued to dominate European thinking about Islam and even in the second half of the 20th century has some vestigial influence. According to this image, Islam was a perversion of Christian truth, even an idolatrous religion, it was a religion of violence, spread by the sword; and it was a religion without asceticism, gaining adherents by pandering to their sexual appetites both in this world and in the next. Muhammad was a deliberate propagator of false

doctrine, thinking only of increasing his own power."* In 1697, an English ecclesiastic in a scholarly work** referred to him (the Prophet) as a wicked impostor and the 'old lecher'. Nearly a century later, Edward Gibbon in the Decline And Fall summed up his opinion of Muhammad's character in the words that 'he indulged the appetites of a man and abused the claims of a Prophet.'

The observations of Prof. Montgomery Watt are so illuminating that it is worth quoting further 'Islam is referred to with flippancy as the message of Muhammad and as the religion of the Quran or of the Arabs or as the religion of the four hundred million Muslims of today. To most in the West, religion means a way of spending an hour or so on Sundays in the practices which give him great confidence to meet the problems of day-to-day life and which encourages him to be friendly towards other people and to maintain the standards of sexual propriety. Beyond this perhaps, religion has nothing to say. It has hardly anything to do with trade and commerce or politics and international relation or industrial relationships. The European may even look long on religion as an opiate developed by exploiters of the common people in order to keep them in subjection. How different from the connotation to the Muslims of the verse (3: 19/17) 'the religion with God is Islam'. The word translated 'religion' is Din; which in Arabic commonly refers to a whole way of life. It is not a private matter for individuals touching only the periphery of their lives, but something which is both private and public, something which permeates the whole fabric of society in a way of which men are conscious. It is—all in one—theological dogma, forms of worship, political theory and a detailed code of conduct, including even matters which the Europeans would classify as hygiene or etiquette . . . ."*** Thus this anti-Islamic prejudice initiated by Christian Europe was propagated all over Asia and Africa with the expansion of European activities commencing in the 16th century. And a segment of the non-Christian Asians themselves inherited this phobia towards Islam and Muslims as it was an accepted pattern, trait and outlook of the ruling masters. And to synchronise with the prevailing mood of the new masters was one way of procuring benefits and privileges. Though Colonial and Imperial rule ceased in almost all countries of the Afro-Asian Continent, inter-communal discord, distrust, and prejudice continue to persist as relics of Imperial rule. Objective academic research would disclose these

* What is Islam ? W. Montgomery Watt, Longman, London. 1968.

** The work referred to is Life of Mahomet — Dean Humphrey Prideaux.

*** W. Montgomery Watt op. cit. p.3.

facts, but it cannot undo them as prejudices once they become part of one's mental make-up almost assume the form of categories of human thought.

Varied ethnic segments of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka constitute a cultural diversity around a religious unity. The global Muslim community itself, an ethnic compendium, entails an incredible cultural diversity, yet they are all bound into one single strand as one people, the followers of the Prophet – the UMMAH (Community). It is neither desirable nor possible to eliminate cultural traits of different ethnic national groups on the basis of religious unity, except those traits which are prohibited by divine injunctions. Hence, the Muslim Ummah has continued to be culturally polycentric and religiously monolithic. We may speak of Indonesian, Pakistani, Nigerian and Arab Muslims. But there is nothing called Indonesian or Arabian Islam. Hence, despite religious unity, there was and continue to be that cultural diversity even among the many ethno-cultural groups which go to constitute the Muslims of Sri Lanka. Within this broad cultural spectrum, there is religio-ethical homogeneity which links the Muslims of Sri Lanka with the one world embracing fraternity of the Muslim community. As the Muslim community covers a tremendous magnitude of global space, cultural polycentrism is inevitable and unavoidable, yet the cohesiveness of the community is assured by the religio-ethical and broader Islamic cultural invariants which governs the Ummah. Hence, the Muslims present a unity in diversity. This focus should not be lost sight of in viewing the Islamic world or the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

This emphasis of polycentrism of culture and monolithic religious unity is not an academic question of theoretical significance, but of practical relevance and meaningfulness to all Muslims and to those who desire to understand the Muslim world. Common variety of local and regional manifestations of wide and varied differences in culture is manifestly clear, equally obvious are those, common religio-ethical elements that link them in one community. As alluded to before, it is an observational fact that there is a distinct difference, for instance, in Arab culture and Indonesian culture. But there isn't an Arab Islam and Indonesian Islam as both are bound by the common religio-ethical principles. We are Sri Lankan Muslims and there is not a variant called Sri Lankan Islam. Despite cultural diversities and variations, Islam played a unique role of integrating them as one people – community (Ummah). Islam in its totality to be all-embracing in its impact on the community, there are more reasons than one. And in this as a religion, it is unique with no parallel.

A clear perception of the Ummah (the Community) is indispensable to a discernment of the Muslim mood and feeling anywhere in the world. The Islamic Ummah is not a mental abstraction but a historical community, based on faith and morality. Ethnicity, nationality, the place of birth, sex, social position and language have no influence on its constitution. The unity of humankind is quintessential to it. This unity is both the Ummah's raison d'etre and its grand finale. Love and service to one's city, country, people, language and ideology is in no way permitted to overshadow or smother the fundamental principles of the Ummah – Universality of mankind and unity of life. Our narrow loyalties only lead to fanaticism, violence and divisiveness among people, which is the prevailing situation in most parts of the world today. To a Muslim, the whole world is his habitat. Arabic as the liturgic language links the Muslims into one Community. And Muslims adopt the language of the land in which he lives as his mother tongue. Sometimes he would even adapt the language of a region within a country as his language. "Their language varied, Tamil in Tamil areas and Sinhala in Sinhala areas."*

Religious instruction and cultural education of a Muslim child begins almost at birth, by five every child both male and female almost by a process of osmosis, picks up the main phrases and words in the Arabic language, the first word being Allah. By the age of ten, a child begins to read the Quran and by the time he reaches adolescence he is able to read and write and understand the Book as it is an integral part of his daily prayers. This grounding in Arabic and Quranic culture takes firm basis, as all Muslims, all the world over, are expected to pray five times a day obligatory and many more times voluntarily facing the direction of the common shrine – the shrine of Ka'aba in Makkah. It symbolises unity of purpose for millions of Muslims performing their prayers. Since the birth of Islam, during the last 1400 years, Hajj has played a significant role in the maintenance of unity and brotherhood among the Muslims, so that a sense of mutual belonging has percolated to their very texture of thoughts and feelings – which we call sentiments. All these cohesive factors have, in meaningful ways, established an intelligible resonance among the Muslim Ummah.

* * *

Literary evidence and recent numismatic and epigraphical findings point to the extent of international commercial activity from pre-Christian

* Wriggins, W. H. – Dilemma of a New Nation – Ch. 11 – p. 23 1960 Princeton Uty. Press.

times, in the region of the Indian Ocean. Certainly, there had been exchange of commodities between Sumeria and the Indus civilizations, the intrepid Phoenicians, Sabeans of Hadramaut and the Yonas, the Persians, and after the conquest of Achemenied Persia in the 4th century B.C. by Alexander the Great, the Greeks and the Romans, after the battle of Actium in 30 B.C., were some of the people who plied their sailing vessels in this region in quest of merchandise. During these early times, the volume and variety of trade should have been limited by many constraints. Decline of these older civilizations and the birth and meteoric spread of Islam from the 7th century A.D. linked most people engaged in trading activities of this region into one ideological fraternity. This feeling of belonging to one brotherhood among diverse races of people in this vast region could not have but, stimulated co-operation and partnership of them even with other communities in international trading activities.

From the 7th to almost to the end of 15th century, the Arabian sea and the Indian Ocean were the arena of intrepid maritime activity of many trading people and nations, who in a way, replaced or substituted the ancients. Malays, Chinese, Bengalis, Tamilians, Malabaris, Gujeratis, Persians, Arabs and East Africans were some of these trading nations. Though these people were not exclusively Muslims, a preponderant majority of them belonged to the Islamic faith. Since, early non-Muslim historiography incorrectly identified all Arabs as Muslims and vice versa, a further error inevitably flowed from this – all Muslim traders in this region came to be referred to as Arabs and since Portuguese times as Moors.

To all these ethnically disparate people, maritime trade was not something new, but since the 7th century, a large majority of them came to be linked by one common faith and experienced a feeling of belonging to a single Ummah (Community) quite irrespective of the countries or ethno-cultural patterns they belonged to. The concept of 'nation', and the phenomenon of 'nationalism' are of recent origin and was not understood by them chauvinistically.

Dr. Sirima Kiribamune, in her Paper on the 'Muslims and the Trade of the Arabian Sea with special reference to Sri Lanka from the birth of Islam to the 15th century', makes a penetrating analysis of the fluctuating trends in this region.

From antique times, maritime trade had been in progress. The Semitic people from the Hadramaut and Yemen had carried on trade across the Red Sea with Egypt and the East African Coast. The Phoenician branch of

the Semitic people carried on maritime shipping in this region sailing down the Gulf of Aqaba and drifting along the Red Sea. So did the pre-Aryan Indians of Harappa-Mohenjodaro fame carry on trade with the Sumerian civilization which straddled the Shatt-ul-Arab. The Arabian Coast facing the Red Sea, and Hadramaut and Yemen, with the Arabian Sea spreading out before them, and the Arabian Coast running up the Persian Gulf to the head-waters of the Shatt-ul-Arab, gave the early Semitics greater opportunities for sea-faring than to most people in this region. This opportunity widened still further with tremendous prospects with the spread of Islam, as most people around this region became adherents of the new faith. A faith which electrified all followers into one brotherhood – in which there was no room for chauvinism, racism and bigotry.

Dr. Kiribamune, in tracing the maritime trade of this region by way of background briefing, traces the rise and fall of the fortunes of various powers in this region. She shows how with the inauguration of the Achemenid Empire in the 6th century B.C., it rapidly expands to include Mesopotamia, Egypt and eventually North West India, by virtue of which Persia begins to control the silk route overland and the sea route to the Far East which brought much prosperity to ancient Iran. The conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great, in the 4th century B.C., brought a new dimension to the trade of this region. The South Arabian Coast and its shoreline up the Persian Gulf on the east and up the Red Sea in the west, made the Arab seamen's services vital to successively emerging empires; this was all the more necessary as shipping during the early days was 'hugging the coast', hence the Arabs could not be avoided. During this early period, Arab ships frequented the ports of the western coast of India and Ceylon.* With the emergence of the Roman Empire, and especially after 30 B.C., when Egypt was annexed to the Roman Empire after the battle of Actium, Roman ships sailing down the Red Sea reached the Indian Coast. And Arab ships were plying between the coast of Hadramaut and the Indian Ports of Broach and across to the ports of East Africa and the Malabar Coast and Sri Lanka. It is even conjectured that the Yonas referred to in the Mahavamsa** to whom Pandukabhaya assigned separate quarters in Anuradhapura were the early pre-Islamic Arabs.

The rise of the Sassanidian power in Persia, and the establishment of the Byzantine Empire in Anatolia, had great repercussions on the trading development of this region. With contrasting difference in cul-

* G. P. Hourani, Arab Seafaring, Princeton Uty. Press 1951 – pp. 8–10.
** MV Ed. By W. Geiger, Lond., P. T. S. 1950, Ch. XV. 90.

ture, civilization and religion, these two empires became adversaries in trade. As Byzantium operated through their co-religionist in Abyssinia, these two empires clashed in Southern Arabia. And by the 6th century, i.e. the century before the emergence of Islam, Persia held the monopoly of the eastern trade and Byzantine attempts to wrest it through Abyssinia ended in failure. And Persian control of trade extended to India and Sri Lanka in this century. It is believed that in the 6th Century, Ceylon was the most important entrepot in the region and was according to Cosmas, frequented by Abyssinian merchants. Numismatic evidence up to Heraclius (613-641 A.D.) confirms the Byzantine contact we have had.

The fluctuating fortunes of Sassanid Persia and Byzantines through Abyssinia, in their attempts to gain control of Southern Arabia between the 4th and the 6th century A. D., was indeed a serious blow to the Himyarite Arab Kingdom. However, it is not unlikely, that the Arab traders were operating their commercial activities under the patronage of these two rival commercial powers.

So the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean were neither strange nor unknown to the Arabs; when in the 7th century after Islam, they took to trade and navigation in this region in a dominant and forceful way as Islam began to expand through Persia to India and beyond. Prior to the 7th century, the Arabs were only a commercial and naval force at best, but now, unified by the new religion, they became in addition, a political and religious force to contend with. Continuity of the old trade was maintained with a dynamism resulting from the new trends.

Arab military conquest came to a halt with Sind and Multan, but the spread of Islam continued in India and beyond through commerce and conversion. Port towns, mainly along the coast, became the nucleus of Muslim trade and community settlements. Initially, these settlements were, Arab, Persian and East African; but, with the spread of Islam, Indian communities too entered this type of port town settlements. And this pattern began to spread out along the Indian Coast, Ceylon, Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago and China. In fact, by about the middle of the 8th century, there was a very strong Muslim community, composed of Arabs and Persians in Canton. The Canton rebellion of Muslims in 758 A.D. and the Chinese reprisals in 760 are confirmations of this fact. Ceylon's importance was great as an entrepot when Persia under the Sassanids prior to Islam was dominant in this region. Improvements in navigation and the ability of the Arabs

and the Persians to go direct to Canton after the 8th century, and the rise of Srivijaya Empire, perhaps minimised the importance of Ceylon as an entrepot.

In the 7th century, Ceylon's connection with Arabia should have been very close indeed as we learn* that during the reign of Aggrabodhi III, a delegation was despatched from this island on a fact-finding mission to Arabia, when the people of this country heard of the Prophetic mission. Though the mission set out when the Prophet himself was living, it was able to reach Arabia only during the time of Caliph Umar (654-664), but the chief envoy having died on the way, the Hindi servant is reported to have reached the island to tell the tale. So it is highly probable that Arab settlements existed in Ceylon prior to the 7th century, which became the precursors of Muslim settlements that followed in the 7th century. This is evident from al-Baladhuri of the 9th century. According to him, the Ceylon king had despatched, a little before 710 A.D., the daughters of Muslim merchants who had died in the island.

Muslim dominance in the region, including Ceylon, continued to increase until it reached an influential position by about the 9th century. "The 9th century saw the Muslims as dominant traders along the entire maritime route from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to Canton. . . The 9th century marked the heyday of the famous Port of Siraf on the Persian Gulf. . . . The archaeologists who excavated at Mantai have specially mentioned the Siraf link in terms of ceramic finds."** She cites a wealth of information from Arab sources to show that Ceylon was a familiar port of call of Arab merchants during this period in the Indian Ocean.

Serendib (the Land of Rubies) is how Ceylon was known to the 9th century Arab writers, which is indicative at least of the foremost item for which the island was known to the Arabs. On approaching this land, Adam's Peak is the landmark which the navigators of old looked for. To the Arabs, Adam's Peak was of legendary importance and was a place of pilgrimage.

The massacre of foreigners in Canton around 878 A.D., which perhaps included a large number of Arabs, the disintegration of the Abbaside

* S. A. Imam, "Ceylon and Arab Relations", M. I. C. H. Souvenir 1944–65; quoted from Ajab-el-Hind 'Marvels of India ' by Ibn Shariyar.

** Vide – Dr. Sirima Kiribamune. Seminar Paper in this Volume.

Caliphate by the end of the 9th century, and the destruction of the Port of Siraf by an earthquake towards the end of the 10th century, confined Muslim trade to the South East Asian region. Commercial policies of the Colas, and the Srivijaya Empire, are not unlikely to have restricted Arab trade to some extent. This change in the trading pattern brought China into the South East Asian region with the East Asian goods to India and Ceylon at the end of the 9th century. Hence the increasing frequency of Muslim merchants' visit to Indian and Ceylon Ports about this period. So once again, there should have been an ascendancy in the significance of the island as an entrepot for Far Eastern goods. This would explain the greater influx of Muslims to this island during this period.

Archaeological evidence,* especially from tombstones dated 10th century found around Colombo, Mannar and North Central Province confirms these Muslim settlements. But with the decline of the Sinhalese in the 11th century, because of Cola invasion, Muslim trade too should have been adversely affected. And with the liberation of the country by Vijayabahu (1055–1110 A.D.) Ceylon's fortunes derived from foreign trade appears to have revived. And under Parākramabāhu I, it should have been one of the main sources of revenue judging by the interest taken by this monarch in trade and commerce. Chief carriers of trade during this period continued to be Muslims.** Hence the Muslim community in Ceylon should have been a co-beneficiary of this prosperity. If we are to go by Geniza records, 12th century was one of the most flourishing periods of West Asian trade. And Trincomalee as the main port of this period should have had its settlement of foreign merchants. And from the Arab geographical treatise of the 12th century by Idrisi, we may infer, that besides Muslims, Jews and Christians also wielded influence in trade and commerce. The existence of a well-established Muslim community at Trincomalee is further confirmed from a tombstone inscription found at Trincomalee, dated towards the end of the 12th century. Dr. Kiribamune shows how, many significant regional events occurring in the 13th century, brought about a shift in the East-West trade from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. And in consonance with this shift, a fundamental change in the trade and maritime activity of the island ensues. Hive of commercial activities shifted from Trincomalee and North East to the South Western seaboard of Ceylon. Muslim commercial ties grew still closer with this island after the drift of the Sinhalese to the South West in the beginning of the 13th century. The sequence of events leading to this shift are well recounted

* Md. Sameer, "Archaeological Evidence of Early Arabs in Ceylon". MICH., 21st Anniversary Souvenir 1965. – Col. 1966. p. 31–38.

** Marco Polo – Travels. Trans. R. E. Letham. Lond. 1958.

with useful documentation. Attempts made by Sinhala royalty to induce Muslim merchants from Egypt is confirmed by numismatic evidence.* Very strong Muslim presence in this land is further substantiated by an Arabic inscription on the rock surface of Adam's Peak, which invokes the blessings on the Prophet.**

Fourteenth century unfolds a dismal picture of the history of this country. Sinhala rulers were divided among themselves with the scions of the Alokeswara family at Kotte ranged against the ruling dynasty of Gampola, while Arya Cakravarti held sway in the north. Despite the confusion in Ceylon's political history, its external trade continued. And Muslims, according to Ibn Batuta, appear to have held sway in the south western ports of the island from Galle to Colombo and had access to the trade of the north under Arya Cakravarti. Hence from the 14th century, Muslim trade continued to increase until they were almost in a monopolistic position by the time the Portuguese arrived at the commencement of the 16th century.

The island of Sri Lanka, situated as it is in the Indian Ocean, south of Cape Camorin, had been geographically placed right in the centre of the international oceanic trade routes. And the Indian Ocean has been the scene of trading activities from antiquity. Trading vessels of Egyptians, Sumerians, Indus people, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans were active in the western half of the Indian Ocean; while those of the Persians, Arabs, Gujeratis, Tamils, Bengalis and Chinese navigated almost the whole ocean in later times. Since the 16th century, with the voyages of discoveries and formation of trading companies amongst the European nations, European activities began to fan out in the Indian Ocean region. Until the application of steam power in the late 18th century, trading activities of umpteen nations in the Indian Ocean were influenced by the vagaries of the winds, hence the movement of vessels were fraught with danger and uncertainty. Therefore, in far-off times, the island of Sri Lanka should have constituted a haven to the sea-weary traders. But from early antiquity until the appearance of Christian west, all nations and peoples, used the Indian Ocean, despite varying political vicissitudes and commercial fortunes with an air of healthy competition. But with the entry of Europeans into this region, right from the beginning of the 16th century, armed violence entered the arena of trade and commerce. Portuguese were the first nation to introduce armed conflict into oceanic trade, deprive their rivals and establish a monopoly for themselves by inaugurating an oceanic empire for them-

* Codrington. Ceylon Coins and Currency. 158 ff.
** Sameer. op. cit. p. 37.

selves stretching from Hormuz to Malacca. During this period, as the Muslims were the most-dominant in maritime trade of the Indian Ocean, they were the worst affected by this trade policy of the Portuguese. Nor did the Muslims regain their position in this region and in Sri Lanka after the decline of the Portuguese, as the Dutch who followed them continued the policy of persecution of Muslims with calvinistic zeal.

With the mastery of the sea and improvement in nautical skills, the policy of 'hugging the coast' had been abandoned in favour of bold, well defined oceanic routes from the Far East to the Arabian Sea via the Indian Ocean. This improvement in maritime trade brought Sri Lanka into greater prominence. Besides its famous spices, gems, ivory and pearls and its strategic position for sea-weary and storm rocked vessels, the island had become an entrepot.

The question of "dominance" of the ocean by any single people was unknown and unheard of prior to the 16th century. Before the emergence of Islam in the 7th century, this oceanic highway was used equally by the Persians and Arabs; people of North West and North East India such as Gujeratis, Malabaris, Bengalis and Tamils; and the Malays and Chinese of South East Asia and the Far East. This tradition of collective and peaceful sharing of oceanic routes continued uninterrupted even post-Islam though the Persians and some of the North Indian communities had been converted to Islam, which religion continued to have adherents even in South India. Trade and missionary activities spread Islam to the South East Asian islands and to China and Far East. Dr. Indrapala in his paper on 'The Role of Peninsular Muslim Trading Communities in the Indian Ocean Trade') shows how the Arabs and Persians spread their religion amongst the Hindu mercantile community and paved the way for the influential Muslim trading communities to grow in the region. By the 9th century, Muslim trading communities had consolidated their position along the western coast of India.* Conversion, trade and inter-marriage augmented their ranks. Consequently, Arab maritime trade moved from the Persian Gulf to Gujerat and the Malabar Coast and thence via Sri Lanka, it veered to the Nicobar Islands. From here, they advanced on to the Malay coast and thence towards the Indonesian Archipelago from where they cruised to China. Hence from very early times, Sri Lanka became a vital link in the Arab Sea routes.

Muslim trading communities established along the Malabar Coast, Kranganore and the eastern coast of India increased in numbers, especially

* Touissant, History of the Indian Ocean.

after the decline of the Colas in the 13th century.* From Gujerat and down the ports of Malabar Coast such as Calicut, Cochin, Ponnani, Dhabol, Goa and up the eastern ports including Kayal which the Muslims dominated since the 9th century, commercial links were established with the Muslims who controlled the ports on the western coast of Sri Lanka.

It will be observed that though the original or pioneering Muslim traders were Arabs or of Arab descent,** their numbers though replenished by fresh immigrants, were actually swelled by inter-marriage, conversion and natural increase.*** So that with the passage of time with diminution or diffusion of the Semitic element, the Muslims, because of the ideological valency of their religion, continued to be Arabs only in a cultural sense. So that by the 15th century, the Indian element was beginning to smother the Arab element amongst the Muslims who were dominating the seaborne trade of South and South East Asia. Yet, despite this ethnic shift within the Muslim trading community, peaceful collaboration in trade with the Hindu and Jaina traders continued, though the latter played a subordinate role now.**** Violence and conflict in trade in the region begins with the entry of the rapacious European trading companies.

While the local Moorish community in this country handled most of the distribution trade and collected the local merchandise and transported them to the ports, the Indian Muslims and the Arabs carried on the oceanic trade in the Asian region. Amongst the Indian Muslims, the Gujeratis appear to have played an enterprising role by their control and skill in shipping.***** Citing authorities, Dr. Indrapala brings out in his paper, not only of the Indian Muslims, primarily of the Gujeratis' superior naval skill, but also their abilities in shipbuilding, in both of which, they seem to have been far ahead of the Portuguese in the 16th century. Indo-Sri Lankan trade in the 16th century appears to have been dominated by the Tamil and Malabari Muslims, while shipping in the Indian Ocean from the 14th to the 16th centuries were dominated by Muslim ethnic variants, such as Arabs, Gujeratis, Malabaris, Tamils and Malays. All of them regardless of ethnic distinctions were "Mouros" to the Portuguese, because all of them were Muslims.

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* M. Mujeeb. The Indian Muslims. Lond. 1969.
** Vide Dr. Indrapala's Seminar Paper in this Vol.
*** Ibid.
**** Vide. Dr. Indrapala's Seminar Paper in this Vol.
***** M.N. Pearson. – Merchant And Rulers in Gujerat. Coastal Western India.

The Muslims of Sri Lanka whom the Portuguese encountered in the 16th century were described by them as Mouros. When the Iberian Peninsula composed of Portugal and Spain confronted Islam, it was a meeting with the people of ancient Mauritania (not to be confused with the present sovereign state by that name) which then was largely composed of present-day Morocco and Algeria whose people were Berbers, and whom the Portuguese called Mouros. And subsequently, with the voyages of discovery, exploration and colonization, whenever the Portuguese came across Muslims, whatever their origin, were labelled Mouros, whom they considered their inveterate foes in religion and trade. It is in some such way, that the Muslims of Sri Lanka of the 16th century came to be called Mouros* and eventually by modification as Moors. Their numerical strength in Sri Lanka had been progressively augmented by fresh arrivals from South India, for which evidence is furnished in the papers included in this volume. Portuguese tombos testify to the fact that during the 16th century, along the western coast were found permanent, well consolidated Moorish settlements in all major ports from Mannar to Matara. And in most of these towns, Moors had their own headmen.**

The origin of Muslim settlements around the Indian Ocean region including those of Sri Lanka goes back to pre-Islamic traders of Semitic ancestry, such as, the Phoenicians, Sabaeans, and those of the Hadramaut and the Himyarite Kingdom in the Yemeni region. It is the considered view of scholars,*** that the Moors of Sri Lanka are of Arab descent. During the early period, the exclusive and abiding interest had been, trade combined with adventure and curiosity. The early Arabs may have considered the island a haven of peace and refuge during inclement weather and an entrepot for exchange of commodities of this region. "From the end of the millenium, Muslim traders seemed to dominate the scene and in the context of the expansion into South East Asia used it as a bridgehead and base. Relations between them and the local rulers were very cordial, because, both were non-interfering and the traders steered clear of the fire and sword policies. . ."**** But recorded evidence appears subsequently to confirm Arab familiarity of Sri Lanka. Abu Zayd quoting Ibn Wahab in the 10th century, speaks of Arabs' intimate knowledge about the sources of Ceylon's gems and of the local mining process.***** The 10th

* Sonahar – A Brief History of the Moors of Ceylon, Van Sanden, J. C. Col. 1926.

** Vide Seminar Papers in this Vol. of Dr. T. B. H. Abeysinghe.

*** Wriggins, op. cit. ch. ii

**** Mendis, op.cit p. 198.

**** Tennent. op.cit. p. 560.

century Muslim writers Istakhari, Ibn Hawqal and Muqadissi speak of Serendib as the final destination of Muslim navigators.* The earliest reference to cinnamon as a product of Sri Lanka is found in the 10th century work of Buzurg b. Shariyar in a book entitled Ajaib al Hind** (Wonders of India). 10th century Arab writer Istikhari lists spices, aloe wood, medicinal herbs and rubies as commodities of Ceylon. An extremely valued item was dooshab treacle coveted by kings and nobles according to the author.*** A Sinhalese text of the 13th century refers to four kinds of scents besides saffron, sandalwood, frankincense and Turki-tel (oil) imported from West Asia.****

With the passage of time, changes followed, Arab traders realized the expediency of permanent settlements. Thus by the 13th century, Moors seem to have been the most dominant element in the Indo-Sri Lankan trade. Marco Polo who broke journey in Ceylon observed the significant presence of Muslims in the island. Ibn Batuta, who visited Ceylon in the following century (1344), noted not only the conspicuous presence of Muslims along the coast, especially the south west coast, but, of their permanent settlements in the interior of the island. He further records, that the Muslims also carried on trade with the northern part of the island, which at that time was, under Arya Chakravarti. Thus by the 13th century, the Moors seem to have been the most dominant element in the Indo-Sri Lankan trade, and by the 16th century, permanent Muslim settlements of substantial magnitude dotted the maritime provinces of the island, with larger concentrations on the western, more particularly on the south west littoral. "In the 15th century, this area (of S. and S.E. Asia) stretching from the Western India to the Archipelago was under Muslim kingdoms, except for Sri Lanka and Malabar Kingdom. Politically therefore, this was a predominantly Muslim area, but it was not organized as a single Islamic force . . . ."*****

At the commencement of the 16th century, Colombo was predominantly a Moorish city. In fact, the present metropolis of Colombo, it is believed, when first known in history is, heard of as a Moorish trading settlement.****** And with the rapid spread of Islam, following the 7th cen-

* Arab Geographers' Knowledge of South India. — Husayn Nainar, S. Madras — 1942.

** Studies in Islamic History and Culture. — Yusuf, S. M. — Lahore. 1970.

*** Imam, S. A. 'Ceylon — Arab Relations' — MICH Souvenir 1944—65.

**** Saddharmaratnavaliya. Ed. D. B. Jayatilake. Col. 1936. p. 640.

***** Mendis, V. L. B. op. cit. p. 216.

****** Centenary Volume of the Colombo Municipal Council. 1865—1965. By Hulugalle, H. A. J. Cey. Govt. Press. 1965.

tury, Arab commercial activities became more pronounced in the region around the island, and by the 8th century, the ancestors of the Moors were dominant in the entire western sea-board of the island, with settlements stretching all along the western sea-board. On the eastern part of the island too, there were Muslim settlements in Trincomalee and Kudiramalai.* On the evidence of Queiros, it is quite evident that in the commencement of the 16th century, the Muslims were in complete control of the import-export trade of the island deriving much profit from it. No wonder they incurred the displeasure and incited the wrath of the Portuguese. Existence of the Muslim settlements in the interior of the Kandyan Kingdom and the maritime provinces is an indication that they had evolved a distribution system for the imported commodities such as Indian calico, linen, rice, dry fish, etc. And perhaps they used the same network to garner the produce of the land such as areca, spices, precious stones, ivory etc. Pack bulls which came to be used for the transport of goods to and from the ports eventually gave the Moors a dominance in the transport services of the country,** that they were called upon to perform madige rājakariya for the king.

The arrival of the Portuguese in Colombo in 1505 was ominous to the Muslims of Sri Lanka. Portuguese policy and attitude to the Muslims of this island was an extension of their policy at home, and Colombo was to cease to be a Moorish city and the Muslims became a persecuted lot. The Portuguese ordered the expulsion of the Muslims from Sri Lanka.*** And by a decree of 22 April, 1613, of Azevedo, a viceroy between 1612–17, no Moor was allowed to reside in Colombo.**** And then followed a royal decree from Portugal,***** by which the king ordered a total prohibition of the Moors being admitted to the island. Such were the harsh measures unleashed on the Muslim community of this country.

The Portuguese not only found the Muslims their adversaries in trade, but also, had the goodwill of the natives of this country. The Muslims were not competitive in trade as far as the Sinhalese were concerned. On the contrary, they were complementary, hence a necessary adjunct in Sinhala society. Furthermore, the Portuguese found the Moors to be inflexible in their faith, hence, they could not be converted. When the Portuguese

* Ibid. – quoting Tennent.

** John D'Oyly – A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom. Dehiwela 1975. p.26.

*** The Portuguese in Ceylon. 1617–1638. Col. 1972. p.3. By Dr. C. R. de Silva.

**** Portuguese rule in Ceylon. 1594–1612. Col. 1966. By Dr. T. B. H. Abeysinghe.

***** Ibid.

began the systematic persecution of the Moors in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Moors were welcomed by the Sinhala kings and people,. especially in the Kandyan hills.

Dr. Abeysinghe quoting from original Portuguese archival sources lays bare the decrees by which the Muslims of this country were subject to untold sufferings, and how with the goodwill of the Sinhala populace and the royalty they were able to carry on their peaceful and economic activities by which they endeared themselves to the natives of the land. The Muslims displayed great religious conviction, but at no stage did they attempt to disconcert the Sinhala Buddhists by attempts at proselytizing them, desecrate their places of worship or disrespect the members of the sangha.

Dr. C. R. de Silva examines the role of Muslim traders in Asia in the 16th century – a century which marked the zenith of their power in the Indian Oceanic trade. And quite ironically, also the century that marked the beginnings of the hostile confrontation with the Christian West, beginning with the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, French and British. This paper, makes a clear distinction between Muslim dominance and European dominance of trade. Muslim dominance in trade meant a free and healthy competition of many nationalities of Muslims, such as, Arabs, Persians, Gujeratis, Bengalis, Malays etc.; besides there was a free participation in the trade of the area by the Hindus and the Chinese. European dominance really meant operations being directed by a single central power backed by armed force, which was meant to deprive every other competitor of any share in the trade of the region. So every time, the Portuguese deprived the Muslims of revenue by capturing an entrepot, Muslims shifted their emporium of trade elsewhere. Such has been the history of Malacca when it fell in 1511 to the Portuguese, the former sultan of Malacca began the rival commercial quarter in Johore. Then there emerged Atjeh in the 1530s followed by Pedir which was really an entrepot. When Pedir began to decline, the kingdom of Pacem began to rise. Bengal ports such as Gaur and Satgaon were dominated by Bengal Muslim traders who along with Gujerati Muslim traders and the Mapillai traders in the Malabar region controlled the trade of this area. Though they were Muslim by religion, they were of different nationalities and culture, hence there was competition even amongst them. But there were no attempts to eclipse or annihilate one section by another. All these categories of Muslim traders during this period traded with Ceylon in rice, calico etc., and purchased in turn precious stones, ivory, pearls, elephants, spices, areca etc. While the Bible followed the soldier during European activities in Asia, Islam followed the

trader. History of the Muslim communities in this region may be traced to migration, trade, conversion and perhaps inter-marriage.

In as much as the Bangali Muslims were dominant in the South East of the region of the Indian Ocean, so the Gujerati Muslim traders were dominant in a region which linked up the western coast of India with Persia, Arabia and East Africa. Cambay, Rander Dieu, Calicut, Quilon were equally busy entrepots as those on the eastern coast of India. Trading monopoly of one people to the exclusion of another was something which made no sense in this region prior to the commencement of European activities. For instance, Malabar was a region under Hindu rulers and there the Hindu chetties, the merchants of the local Hindu Vyabari caste and the Muslims shared the trading activities of the area. And there is no record of these people having resorted to open hostility leading to war over trade. Then there were the Malays and the Chinese who from the South East and Far East participated in the lucrative trade of this region as did the Persians, the Arabs, and the East Africans from the west of this region. Yet these people did not consider themselves adversaries in trade despite their religious, cultural and ethnic differences.

The Indian oceanic trade embraced a much larger area and involved a greater number of nationalities and perhaps in volume and variety of merchandise far exceeded those of the Mediterranean trade where the Egyptians, the Phonecians and later the Greeks and the Romans were involved in pre-Christian times. This Indian Oceanic trade extended as far as Moluccas and Canton in South China sea in the east, moving westwards covering Indonesian Archipelago, the Straits of Malaya, Burma, the ports of Bengal and Gujerat, the Coromandel and the Malabar coast of the subcontinent to Ormuz at the head of the Persian Gulf, Aden and East African trading settlements from Sofla, Angoche, Querimba Is; and Mombasa in Zanzibar. Thus the Indian oceanic trade of the 15th century covered a large extent of the world, brought in many nationalities and the range of merchandise was incredibly greater than those of the overland caravan trade in the preceding centuries. Despite the participation of various ethno-cultural groups in the trade of this region, it was not altogether a Muslim affair, even though most of them belonged to the Islamic faith. There were the Chinese and the Hindus besides. Though the Muslims were preponderant, hence, dominant, trade was not monopolised by them to the detriment of other nations. Martial element and bellicosity leading to monopolization of trade, is a factor which emerges with the commencement of European activities in Asia. In this vast and complex region of many nationalities where each derived its prosperity from the sea-borne

trade, the island of Ceylon by its central and insular position, shared in the fortunes of this trade. And under the vicissitudes of commercial activities influenced by politics, fortunes fluctuated from the western to the eastern sea-board of the island. And the Muslims who established the settlements along the coastal towns motivated by trade and religion, began to penetrate the hinterland.

Citing C. R. Boxer, the significant point of Indian oceanic trade is driven home by Dr. C. R. de Silva, that despite the possession of strategic points in this wide region from Moluccas to Ormuz, the Portuguese monopoly of trade was not fully effective, at best they were able with naval superiority to regulate the course of shipping. Always rival Muslim centres rose and fell and Muslim trade continued to be important, though no longer dominant. Their commercial skilfulness enabled them to continue operations in trading activities, while they remained subservient to the Portuguese and Dutch nautical superiority. "Muslim trade declined not due to the lack of commercial expertise, but, because it was faced with the use of force based on superior technology."

* * *

The Dutch were more conscious in making commercial gains than religious inroads, hence, they were really business-oriented than the Portuguese. Though they were ranged against the Catholic variant of Christianity of the Portuguese, yet, they shared with them 'the anti-Islamism' of Christian West. Despite nearly one and a half century of Portuguese persecution, the Dutch found the Muslims in Asia and Sri Lanka to be their main competitors in trade. This was all the more the reason why the Moors especially of Sri Lanka along with their compatriots in Asia should continue to be the victims of Christian persecution for another century and a half. Though a large number of Moors fled to the interior in the face of Portuguese terror, the Portuguese failed to make a clean sweep of the coast of Moors, as their settlements though reduced in magnitude still continued to dot the western coast even at the commencement of Dutch rule in Ceylon.

In trading activities business tycoons such as, Mir Jumla in Bengal, Golconda, Sri Lanka and Achin; and of Ali Raja in the Malabar coast and of Periyathamby Marikkar of Ramnad District is well recorded. And their commercial activities that linked up Sri Lanka and whose services were sought even by the Dutch is well recounted by Dr. Kotelawela in his well documented paper. The Imperial Dutch Company's trading operations

were no match for the skilful commercial manoeuvres of these captains of trade and commerce of this region.

From the memoirs of Joan Maetsuyker (1650)*, we gather that Muslims were the beneficiaries of areca bartered for calico from the Coromandel coast, which is just one item in the trade which incited the envy of the Dutch. Kandyan trade during this period passed through not only the ports of Galle and Puttalam, but through Jaffna in the north and Kottiyaram in the east, and Muslims were the carriers of this trade. Hence, the Muslims in addition, played the role of liaison and courier between the king and the Dutch, as they had won the confidence of the Sinhala royalty. And instances were many, especially in the 18th century,when the Sinhala kings and chieftains intervened on behalf of Muslim merchants with the Dutch authorities. And the Dutch not infrequently solicited the services of the Muslims in trade and transport both overland and seaborne. Most Dutch documents refer to the Muslims as the foremost participants in the trading activity of the 17th and 18 centuries in Sri Lanka and South East Asia. When the Dutch, to deprive the Muslims of their benefit, in desperation declared most items of trade a government monopoly, the Muslims appear to have resorted to smuggling with the active encouragement of the Sinhala authorities. Most ports north of Puttalam on the north west coast and those north of Kottiyar on the north east coast turned out to be busy centres of smuggling. Dutch records confess of the ineffectiveness of their preventive measures, as the Tamil merchants and rulers of South India and the chieftains and kings of the Sinhalese co-operated with the Muslims as it was mutually beneficial. Hence, acknowledging realities, the Dutch were compelled to grant certain offices and privileges to the Muslims, in order to utilize them to the company's advantage.** Beginning with Colombo, Muslim headmen came to be appointed around the coastal towns including Jaffna. The Dutch because of their limited knowledge of the customs and traditions of the land and awareness that this ignorance of their's would rouse the hostility of the people adapted the astute policy of farming out taxes about the middle of the 18th century at annual auctions. Muslims were found in large numbers to be the rentiers in Galle, Matara and Jaffna. This in the 18th century became a lucrative source of income to the Muslims.

Long before the arrival of the Portuguese, Muslims had found the Kandyan kingdom fruitful for their trading activities. Kandyans and Muslims found

* E. Reimer's Translation. Colombo. 1927.

** Mémoirs of Cornelis Joan Simons. 1707. Translated by S. Pieters, Colombo. 1914.

themselves to be mutually useful to one another; Muslims served them in more ways than one, via trade and commerce; as skilled physicians, and as couriers and emissaries Muslims proved themselves to be worthy residents. Hence, they were elevated to high positions in the king's services. In saving the life of king Kirthisiri, Gopala Mudaliyar of Getaberiya played a significant role in averting the 1760 conspiracy which was organized by a group of Kandyan chieftains with some leading members of the sangha with the avowed purpose of assassinating the king. Muslims also played a great role in diplomatic missions between the Kandyan king and the British mission in Madras.

* * *

Dutch policy towards the Moors was no less in its persecution of them than that of the Portuguese. But the teutonic Dutch were more methodical in their operations. Besides, the Dutch, unlike the Portuguese, were an excellent commercial race. Hence, their judicious policy of ousting the Moors from their commercial positions was ruthless and uncompromising. Dr. Kotelawela's citation from the memoirs of Maetsuycker and of Van Goens amply confirms this point. This policy of dislodging and depriving the Muslims of all economic advantages was extended to all towns from Matara to Jaffna ". . . . . .it is important that Colombo should remain entirely purged of the race of Moors," thus concludes a passage in Van Goens' memoir (p. 35). Resilience and tenacity of the Moors resulted from strict adherence to their religion, hence the Dutch resolved to, "rooting out heathenism and checking the consuming canker of Mahammedan heresy." Muslims were deprived of even performing their religious rites. Ministers of the Dutch Reformed church went to the extent of requesting the governor to forbid the Jaffna Muslims gathering in private premises to recite the Holy Quran on auspicious occasions. At the turn of the 17th century, a new mosque that was built in Jaffna was broken down, 'as it was an affront to the budding Dutch Reformed Church Christianity. . . . . ' .

But all these attempts failed to break down the Muslims of Sri Lanka and towards the end of the 18th century an attempt was made by the Dutch to investigate and study the Muslim laws and customs with a view to codify them. Futility of their monopolistic policies and intolerant religious measures were beginning to be realised, and the Dutch began even to include Muslims in their land grants. But, then it was too late, for the Dutch to profit from a policy of rapproachement with the Moors, the British were already around to replace them.

Dutch policy towards the Muslims of this country was an extension of their policy in the East Indies, at least such is the learned view of Dr. Karl Goonewardene, as brought out in his paper. In the period of European expansion in Asia, though the Portuguese had preceded them, even here, in the East Indian Archipelago, the main rivals of the Dutch were the Muslims.

It is an irony of history that the Hollanders, who were the victims of tyrannical rule of Catholic Spain, rebelled against and constituted their own state, in turn to become the cruel tormentors of the adherence of another religion – Islam. Carnage and destruction caused by the Thirty Years War (1618 – 1648) in Europe, made the great Dutchman, Hugo Grotius, dream of a world order wherein there would be norms to regulate international justice and he wrote on laws governing war and peace – leges bellum et pacis. And today, quite rightly the International Court of Justice is, located at The Hague in Holland.

Quite irrespective of subsequent development of Dutch attitude to civilized international conduct, it is an undeniable fact that they violated all norms of natural justice in their treatment of the Moors of Ceylon. It would be rather modest indeed, to regard their treatment of the Moors cruel, tyrannical and ruthless, treatment of these Moors who had already been the victims of nearly 150 years of Portuguese atrocities, almost bordered on savagery. Dr. Goonewardene citing memoirs and despatches of Dutch governors, secret minutes of the Dutch Council and from independent sources reveals the nature and extent of the persecution of the Moors of Ceylon.

It is evident that the Dutch considered the Moors their implacable enemies, because of religious and economic factors, of which the latter proved to be more determining. The Dutch discovered to their chagrin that the Moors were not susceptible to their evangelical efforts. Under the most agonising conditions of Dutch rule in Ceylon, the Moors continued to adhere to their creed with unswerving fidelity. Much more than Moorish tenacity to abide by their faith was their monopoly in foreign and internal trade which roused the hostility of the Dutch. The Moors, like all oriental people in this region, were carrying on trade with the goodwill and cooperation of the Sinhalese, who were the preponderant natives of this isle. Moorish success was not based on armed might, hence the Dutch, like their predecessors, the Portuguese, found it an uphill task to dislodge the Moors from their established position in this country. This compelled the Dutch at times to change their attitudes. They began to solicit the ser-

vices of the Moors both in external trade and the collection of revenue and in organizing the compulsory public services due to the company. Hence, as Dr. Goonewardene observes, the Dutch were ambivalent in their attitude to the Moors.

The Dutch wished to see that this, "evil sect (the Muslims) does not expand, but rather that they remained suppressed."* Various placants or decrees issued from time to time prevented Muslims from owning immovables such as lands, buildings and such fixed property; they were prevented from peddling their trade and travelling in the Sinhala kingdom; they were forced to move out from settlements where they have been living for generations. Further restrictive decrees followed on the discovery of the lucrative nature of the areca trade. The Dutch declared an absolute monopoly of this trade as of cinnamon. When the Dutch settlers were found to be deficient in their possession of profitable lands, " . . . . . the heathen Moors must under all circumstances give up their lands for the Netherlanders."

With the avowed purpose of crushing the Moors the Dutch authorities, ordered a census and registration of all the Muslims in the Dutch territory, and inventorised their houses and lands and every possession of worth. Further measures followed, especially under Van Goens. Muslims were to be deprived of all forms of livelihood. On ascertaining that the Moors made good money through such crafts as tailoring and shoe-making, these professions were declared monopoly crafts for the Dutch colonists at Galle and Colombo. Only Christians could be butchers and bakers. Muslims were also systematically ejected from the retail trade, and the salt trade was declared a Christian monopoly. Generally in all forms of trade the Dutch were favoured against the Muslims, in such a way that it became impossible for the Muslims to trade. By this preferential treatment, the Dutch authorities, perhaps believed that over a period of time the Moorish community would atrophy economically. The Moors, on Van Goens' resolution in 1660 lost the right to buy houses or immovable property outside Colombo. No increase of Muslim population was tolerated and any increase was viewed with great apprehension and ordered to settle outside Colombo. Muslims had to fetch timber and firewood as part of the public services due to the company from great distances. As possession of immovables by Moors was illegal, Governor Hendrick Becker confiscated all such property and sold them by public auctions. And no Moor was given the right to protest or complain. Any one who proved to be recalcitrant was to be put in chains.

* Quoted from Instructions of Antonij Paviljoen by Dr. Karl Goonewardene.

At no stage were the Moors compensated for this loss even under subsequent British rule.

Even the cultural life of the Muslims was impaired to a painful degree under the Dutch rule, as the Muslims didn't have the elementary freedom to conduct their marriages with certain amount of festivities as the occasion demanded. A new tax was imposed on those Muslims who celebrated their weddings with great pomp. Muslims were deprived of freedom of movement. Their movement, especially into the interior of the country, was under strict surveillance. Compulsory service for the company was stringently enforced. The Moorish headmen were threatened with dire punishment for failure to supply labour, especially for handling cargo at the Galle port.

Dr. Goonewardene in his paper, points out that the Muslims occupied the lowest position in the religious hierarchy set up by the Dutch. Thus the Muslims were, not only economically crushed and socially strangled, but were reduced to a position of lampoon and ridicule. Yet, the indispensability of the Muslims in their services in trade and commerce and navigation was affirmed, when simultaneously the Dutch are reported to have received these traders from the Maldives, Malabar and Coromandel coast, and those of Golconda region and Bengal with great respect. The Dutch also valued the services of the Javanese Muslims who were serving them throughout the island.

The mutual trust and confidence that the Moors enjoyed with the Sinhala royalty and the people was a cause of great anxiety to the Dutch. This is one reason, at least the primary reason, why all their attempts to liquidate the Moors proved abortive. Warm and ready welcome, needy refuge and active assistance and much more – a Buddhist sense of compassion, counterbalanced Dutch inhumanity. The Dutch were unable to evolve a relationship of mutual trust and goodwill with the Kandyans; nor were they successful in their attempts to snap such relationship as it existed between the Muslims and the Sinhalese. In fact in a calculated effort, the Dutch did try to convey to the Sinhala royalty that the Muslims were conspiring to overthrow the Sinhala kingdom of Kandy in league with the Moghals. Despite all the resources of an emerging European power and complete control of the maritime provinces of the island, the Dutch failed to eliminate the Muslims from the country and secondly failed to drive a wedge into the Sinhala–Muslim accord. Today, Dutch rule is no more, but the Moors continue to remain a significant segment of the Sri Lankan nation, and their fraternal feelings and understanding with the Sinhalese

as with every other community in this island is remarkable for its endurance.

* * *

Covering a period of nearly two and quarter of a century up to the year of the Kandyan Convention of 1815, Dr. Lorna Devaraja, traces the life and fortunes of the Muslim community (mainly the Moors) in this country. Citing authoritatively from the memoirs of the Dutch governors, diaries, proceedings from learned journals, official reports, minutes of the Dutch Political Council and so on, in a well documented paper, she shows how the Moors over the centuries without losing their ethnic and religious identity as Moors and Muslims dovetailed into the larger Sinhala – Buddhist society. In a socio-economic and political sense, these two communities found themselves mutually useful even prior to the arrival of the western powers. They found this mutual usefulness almost imperative in the wake of the Portuguese and Dutch predators, who were relentless in their persecution of the adherents of religions other than their own. Eventually, as events developed the relationship between these two communities became symbiotic.

It may be gathered from the observations of other participants at this seminar, that the Kandyan kingdom was not unfamiliar to the Moors prior to the arrival of the Portuguese at the commencement of the 16th century. Even before European activities in the Indian Ocean began, the Moors had been the main link between the Kandyan kingdom and the outside world in trade and commerce. But after the advent of the Portuguese and their subsequent atrocities on the Moors there was a larger influx of Moors into the Kandyan kingdom, stimulated further by the encouraging welcome extended by the Kandyan kings. Hence from the position of itinerant traders who dealt in essential items (such as salt, dry fish, Indian calico, rice and non-essentials such as perfume, incense, trinkets etc.) bartering them for arecanuts, spices etc., they dotted the Kandyan kingdom mainly along their transport routes with small settlements. Larger settlements emerged when the king officially permitted larger numbers to settle down in such areas as Akurana and the Eastern province. By natural increase and migration, the settlements grew in strength and numbers integrating themselves into the social fabric of the Sri Lankan society while retaining their religio-cultural singularity.

Dr. Devaraja reveals, how these Muslims were, with the passage of time, absorbed structurally into the Kandyan polity at all levels of life. For instance, their integration into the Kandyan badde system proved unique. They came to be organized at village levels under Muhandiram, Lekam and

headmen, who were themselves, in certain areas Muslims. Under the badde system, the Muslim fulfilled the obligation to reciprocate the protection and land given them by the king. If it was Kandyan munificence to have taken the Moors into their protection and enabled them to settle down to their Islamic way of life, it was also magnanimous reciprocity on the part of the Moors to serve the Sinhala kings as they did. They did a yeoman service to the king by organizing the transport of goods from the north western and north eastern ports to Kandy and taking back the Kandyan produce for shipment. Muslims were, under the badde system elevated to the highest position of nilame, especially under Kirthisiri Rajasinha (1747 –81), when Sheikh Alim and subsequently his grandson Sheikh Abdul Cader were elevated to this position.

Despite the fact that Islam is a theocentric religion unlike Buddhism and uncompromisingly monotheistic and non-anthropomorphic unlike Hinduism, and the great degree of flexibility on the part of those who profess Islam enabled the Moors to integrate themselves in the web of Sinhala feudal system such as viharagam and the devalagam. In return for the vihara lands or devala lands they tilled or lived on, the Muslims rendered these respective institutions services.* Such dues and obligatory services performed by Muslims to the Udamakadavara Purana Vihara in Hingula, Mawanalle, are listed. Similarly, the Muslims occupied devale lands, for instance in the village of Pamunuva which belonged to the historic Gadaladeniya devale, in the Udunuwara constituency. Muslims in return for occupation of devale lands, performed services to the shrine. Another instance of special interest is that of a Muslim of Dodandeniye – a Village attached to Ambakka devale. This particular Muslim took great pride on behalf of his community to render services to this devale for the lands they occupied. ". . . . . and the devale authorities in turn were honoured by the presence of Ahmed Lebbe in their midst."

While Portuguese brutality on the Muslims continued along the coast, this state of rapport and concord between the Muslims and the Sinhalese stands out as a shining example of oriental tolerance in contrast to the intolerance of rapacious West which the people of this land experienced under the Portuguese and the Dutch. This benign attitude of the Sinhalese is remarkable in that, as Dr. Devaraja points out in her paper, the bhikshus of Ridi vihare, in return for the services rendered by the Muslims of Rambukandana, set apart a portion of the vihare land, out of which

* Vide Diary of Moratota Rajagam Dhammakhanda Thero (dated 1784–1813) SLNA 5/63/101.

income, the Muslims were expected to maintain a 'priest'. Citing Robert Knox, she further points to the Kandyan kings as far back as the 17th century donating lands for the maintenance of mosques. She goes still further, "there were instances when charitable Sinhala people gifted lands to the Muslims to erect places of worship." The understanding and cordial relationship was so consummate to be incredible. This is all the more relevant, especially today, when communal relationship in this country has become so abrasive to be explosive with apparently no solution in sight.

Social stratification on the basis of caste was the main principle on which the Kandyan society revolved, yet, it did not find it a problem to accommodate the Muslims who had no familiarity with this sociological pattern. Caste system had no sanction in Buddhism. The Buddha had revolted against the caste system of his day, and as it prevailed in the Kandyan kingdom, it was more a functional division of labour in Sinhala society which eventually ossified into a stringent social division. Despite this stringency the Muslims were placed very high in the social hierarchy by the Sinhalese.* Hence, the Muslims were treated with respect by the royalty, clergy, nobility and the people. Their trustworthiness, the cosmopolitan nature of their community and the international links they had with the outside world coupled with their linguistic ability enabled them to be used in diplomatic and intelligent missions by the Kandyan kings. This made the Dutch envious of the Muslims.** And the Sinhala kings made use of these Muslims who were intrepid travellers and itinerant traders to play the role of couriers and to keep themselves informed of Dutch activities along the coast.***

Dr. Devaraja's findings disprove the fallacy entertained by most men that Moors are traders and nothing more. Not only did they excel in trade and commerce admirably as it has been their forte, but almost monopolised the local transport services, were engaged in agricultural pursuits, served as couriers and envoys in diplomatic missions for the king and finally integrating themselves in the social fabric of the kingdom, were honoured and appointed to respectable positions in the administrative hierarchy of the country. Muslims had been employed as Chefs in the royal kitchen – a

* A. C. Lawrie. Gazetteer of the C. P. of Ceylon. 2 Vols. 1896 & 1898 Vo. II. p. 678.

** Secret Minutes of the Dutch Political Council 1762. Ed. and Trans by J. H. O. Paulusz. Colombo. 1954. p. 121.

*** Memoirs of Jan Schreuder for his successor – 1762. Trans. by E. Reimers. Colombo 1946. p. 25.

role restricted to extremely trustworthy and reliable men. They were further employed in the royal bath-house which in the context of the time should be considered an honour. The Muslims performed martial duties as the Arab refugees fought for Rajasinha II (1635 – 1687). Even towards the end of the Kandyan rule, around 1810, in addition to the Malabaris, Moors and Malays were trained to be absorbed in the fighting units of Sri Wickrema Rajasinha.* As to the traditional dexterity of the Muslims as weavers, we have the evidence of John Pybus, A. Bertolacci, Van Sanden and Denham.** Tailoring as a profession during the Dutch period was monopolised by the Moors from which the Dutch systematically ejected them.*** And as physicians, many Muslims have been renowned for their skill and loyalty in their service. Hence most of them were attached to the King's betge.**** And even hair-dressing was not unknown to them as there is an oblique reference to the Muslims as barbers or panikki by D'oyly.

Despite all calculated attempts to disrupt Sinhala-Muslim understanding by the Dutch, the relationship between these two communities continued harmoniously.

* * *

There has been since historic times, a change in the range and volume of merchandise exported and imported into Sri Lanka. To discern the reasons that bring about these changing trends and patterns of trade, one has to look beyond the shores of this country for causal factors. From very early times, precious stones, pearls and ivory took precedence over other items in the export trade of the island. Then with the South Indian invasion in the 13th century, Polonnaruwa was abandoned and the drift to the south west began, when, the country owing to the lack of suitable soil conditions, hydrological facilities and perhaps the lack of necessary human skill and labour, coupled with the demands of the world market began to pay more attention to cash crops, such as spices mainly cinnamon; pepper, tobacco and arecanut. This shift in emphasis did not eliminate the old

* John D'Oyly – A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom (Ceylon). 1929. p. 47.

* Vide their foll. respective wks :
i) A view of the Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interest of Ceylon. Lond. 1817 by A. Bertolacci.
ii) Sonahars of Ceylon. By Van Sanden, 2nd Ed. Colombo. 1926. p. 43.
iii) Census of Ceylon. 1911.

*** Memoirs – Van Goens. p. 18.

**** A. C. Lawrie, Gazetteer of the C. P. of Ceylon. p. 934.

items, but their importance was minimised except in the case of the pearl industry, which continued right up to British times in which the Muslims played a significant role. By the 19th century, new items such as coffee, rubber, coconut and eventually tea superseded the former items by assuming a prestigious place amongst the export items. In fact, the plantation industries, constituted the commanding heights of Ceylon's economy.

From very early times, the pre-Islamic Arabs, and from the 7th century A.D. the Muslim Arabs and very many ethno-cultural groups which belonged to the Muslim UMMAH (Community) such as Persians, Gujeratis, Afghans, Bengalis, Coast Moors, Malays and Maldivians actively participated in the trade and commerce of Sri Lanka. In certain items, such as pearls as referred to above, the Muslims constituted the backbone of the industry. "Nobody understands the value of pearls and precious stones as well as they,"wrote Wolf in 1785. In fact, at one stage, they seemed to have dominated the pearl trade at all levels of diving, processing, valuing and export. Muslim monopoly over this trade was, mainly because of their skill and expertise, which was derived perhaps, from their ancestors in pre-Christian times, as the Persian Gulf was renowned in the days of David and Solomon for its world-famous pearls, when this trade was a Phoenician preserve, and Phoenicians and Arabs are ethnic siblings.

Dr. Amir Ali in his perspicacious analysis, brings out the role of Sri Lankan Muslims in the export sector; substantiating his thesis with a maze of demographic data and citing evidence from published documents such as sessional papers, blue books, census and statistics, government reports etc., and from unpublished records such as kachcheri diaries of G.As and A.G.As, he establishes his contention. In addition, he cites evidence of impartial historians and government officials such as Drs. Arasaratnam, Colvin R. de Silva, Lorna Devaraja, Tennent, Arnold Wright, James Steuwart, Bingham, Anthony Bertolacci and others. His paper becomes curiously interesting, not only because why and how the Muslims participated in a wide range of trading operations, but why the Muslims eschewed from certain trades, namely the arrack industry. It may be, that though the Muslims were motivated by profit in trade, yet they were not unmindful of the injunctions of the Quran.

With the rare exception of the arrack trade and to some extent the tobacco industry, Muslims appear to have evinced a keen interest in most trading ventures, including agriculture and transportation services of this country. Trade was their forte, as it had been a tradition from the days of

the Prophet. Trade and commerce was as natural and sacred to the Muslims as agriculture is to the farmer, and tending cattle to the herdsmen. Hence, they took to commercial activity with great dedication and felicity.

The cinnamon trade was almost a Muslim monopoly before the 'wind and waves' drifted Laurenco de Almeida to the shores of Sri Lanka in 1505. Because of the immense profit in this trade, Portuguese, Dutch and the British in succession declared it a state monopoly with the avowed purpose of excluding the Muslims from this trade. This prohibition undoubtedly affected the fortunes of the Muslims disastrously. Once a community's economic life is impaired, their social conditions and cultural life were bound to suffer. And that is exactly what happened to the Muslims of this country. By the time the monopoly on this trade was removed on the recommendations of Colebrooke Commission in 1833, cinnamon had lost the pride of place it occupied among the spices and Sri Lanka's monopoly on this trade was no more, as the Dutch had grown it in the Indonesian Archipelago and begun to export it to Europe. So the Muslims could not procure any advantage by the abolition of the state monopoly in cinnamon at this stage.

* * *

Amongst the Arabs, trade was considered a noble profession. In fact even today, among Muslims, successful merchants are considered with great respect and admiration. So trade continues to be a long established tradition among the Muslims. Unlike agriculture or even industry, trade and commerce assured a quick turn-over and held out adventure, travel and encounter in distant lands with strange people. International trade holds immense possibilities for those who would venture out and the Muslim community being global, it developed a penchant for mercantilist activities. There is nothing that may be considered inherent and inborn about the commercial outlook and trading insights of the Moors. Their predilection for trade is to be explained in view of their history as an extension of Arab economic history. Secondly, whilst trading, Muslims like most orientals, have displayed a proclivity for self-employment. But this inclination to trade and in trade a preference for self-employment has tended to change due to peculiar historical reasons and the development of the commodity producing society under market forces.

Self-employment in trade and commerce is possible and perhaps necessary at the competitive stage of a commodity-producing society. But, now it is known that this form of production inexhorably leads to a monopolistic

stage, wherein opportunities for self-employment in production and distribution demand immense capital outlays. In such situations it has been observed, that Muslims tend to combine their resources amongst their kinsmen and secondly prefer to amalgamate with their compatriots – the Muslims. This trend, we suppose, is not peculiar to the Muslims and is motivated by reasons of security of their investments, especially in a multi-communal society. Such motivations have, over the years encouraged ethnocentric economic life in Asian countries.

Under different stimuli, the Muslims were flexible enough to respond differently from their traditional forte and take to agriculture, gemming, transportation services and so on. The arrival of the Portuguese and the persecution that ensued, compelled the Moors to seek sanctuary in the Kandyan kingdom, and when a large number of them were settled in the Eastern province they took to agriculture. They began to exercise almost a monopoly of the gemming trade and transportation services, especially during the Kandyan days.

Hitherto, the very word 'Muslim' had been synonymous with 'Trade and Commerce'. And this association still persists, though incorrect, as the community is undergoing rapid transition and a change in trend in the mode of earning their livelihood and in social life. In a joint paper, presented at the seminar, by Dr. S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe and Mr. Fazal Davood, this changing trend is examined in the light of available demographic evidence and some surveys conducted by them. Muslims by their strict adherence to their religious conviction and practices avoided secular education under Colonial rule, hence, they were shut out of all benefices of Colonial rule under the Portuguese, Dutch and to some extent under the British. Perhaps, they were not wrong when they shied away from the educational establishments of the foreigners. But, when under the British the educational system shed its proselytizing zeal and when English education became key to employment, social prestige and political power, Muslims appeared to be educationally, the most backward community in the country.

Discriminative decrees and cruelty to the Moors, primarily by the Portuguese and the Dutch explain the backwardness and partly the ubiquitous nature of the Moors of this country. Their dominance on the western seaboard ceased to be since the arrival of the Europeans. And the Muslims do not constitute an absolute majority in any of the 24 revenue districts. Despite the deprivation of their economic advantages and scattering out of their traditional trading settlements, Moors continued to survive and pre-

serve their religo-ethical identity amidst the vast majority of Sinhalese Buddhist population. Tenacity of the Moors and the benign attitude of the Sinhala rulers and people made possible their survival. Sinhala Buddhists and the Moors despite sharp differences in religion, culture and language, found themselves mutually useful. This symbiotic existence of the two communities based on mutual trust, confidence and respectability, matured with time, when in the post-independent period, Muslims were returned to Parliament from predominantly Sinhala Buddhist constituencies such as Kadugannawa, Galagedera, Harispattuwa, Balangoda, Beruwela and Borella.

Despite the diminutive magnitude, Sri Lanka has many different economic conditions in different regions. The average income of an ethnic group, depends to some extent on how the group is distributed among the regions in the country. Differences between the members of the same ethnic groups located in different places, are often greater than the differences between national average income and the average income of the group as a whole. If proper socio-economic investigations and relevant sample surveys are carried out, we are sure, that the regional differences which exist would not only be confirmed, but disparities in new fields such as fertility and IQ rates etc. would be brought to light.

Discrimination has obviously influenced Sri Lankan ethnic groups, including Muslims. Nearly 300 years of Portuguese and Dutch persecution uprooted the Moors from their homes and kept them on the move. Sustained cultural development is impossible in a state of uncertainty, fear and despair. Nevertheless, this state of instability and apprehension made the Moors resilient, tenacious and adaptable. This discrimination partly explains the varied ramifications of economic activities of the Moors from their traditional trade and commerce. These aspects are, clearly delineated in the seminar papers. Regional concentrations of Sri Lankan Tamils enhanced their feelings of ethnic solidarity. A harsh climate combined with poor soil conditions and non-availability of riverways made these people diligent, industrious and frugal in their ways. While under a system of mission schools, which commenced in Jaffna even before the conquest of Kandy in 1815 the Tamils were able to advance educationally. This conjunction of events and conditions gave them a fillip to become almost a dominant minority, especially during the time of the British rule in this country. Unlike the up-country Sinhalese, those of the low-country being exposed to the radiation of western rule from 1505 – 1796 became less rigid and more flexible in their ways, leading to a change in values, attitudes and outlook. They took to new avenues of employment, professions

and economic activities. The Kandyans sequestered in the jungle fastness and mountainous terrain, jealously guarded their independence for nearly three centuries. And after having lost it, two abortive attempts made to recover it in 1817 and 1848 respectively, made them worse off politically and economically. They were the last to receive the advantages of western secular education. Hence the Kandyans too, remained a backward community. This business of discrimination is a complex phenomenon and will have to be gone into in all details.

Education was an obvious influence on incomes at a certain stage, especially during British times. Education was the weakest point of the Muslims, hence they continued to suffer materially under the British. Because either college or university education during the British era meant an income above the national average (whatever that average might be) to those who possessed it. Today, petro-dollars have wiped out this advantage to most educated people because of the availability of employment for the illiterate, unskilled and skilled labour of various grades and of technical ability.

The joint paper of Dr. Samarasinghe and Mr. Fazal Davood, though limited in scope, gives a new sense of direction, for future investigators of the subject to realize the significance of 'field work', in other words, of participant observation, as this method was discovered and proclaimed by the British-trained anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. Future researchers should go into various aspects of business, education, employment, literacy and IQ and fertility rates etc. of the Muslim community. All these factors are inter-related, hence their combined use is bound to give us a scientific understanding of the Muslim community in terms of measurable quantities.

Fertility tends to be greatest when people are poorest, "the rich get richer, and the poor have children." Those sections of the Muslims with the poorest incomes, especially the Moors and the Malays, have the highest fertility rates. Moorish women who have completed college or university education, have fewer children than those who could not go up in educational attainments. High fertility rates directly lowers the standard of living of a group by spreading a given income more thinly among the family members. This is exactly what has happened to poor Moorish and Malay families who conglomerate in towns. In 1963, 38.9 per cent of the Muslims were reported to be living in urban areas, when the national average was less than 20 per cent. This explains their poor housing, lesser education and lack of cultural pursuits. High fertility is also correlated

with lower scores on mental tests by children, as they receive smaller shares of parental care and time. It has been observed, that a larger number of those who fail the mental tests come from larger families.

Dr. Samarasinghe and Mr. Fazal Davood make an empirical approach to the subject in trying to draw sociological conclusions on the basis of concrete demographic evidence. They essay to base their conclusions on neither literary sources nor oral traditions, but on factual evidence, which the reader would glean from the tables of figures cited. Their difficulty is the limited nature of the surveys on which they rely and the paucity of demographic information on various socio-economic aspects of the community. Hence, their inability to shed much light on the recent history of the Muslim community's diverse trends in social mobility is understandable. However, the methodology with which they attempt to approach the subject is praiseworthy. Sociologists and historians are not always the best of neighbours, yet, a sociological approach to history has proved to be the latest trend. Such a discipline may help to shed new light about the Muslim community.

The initial wealth and skill of a group and their time of arrival are important in the competitive survival of communities. Incomes, occupations, unemployment, fertility and literacy rates and educational levels differ. And these disparities and discrepancies become crucial in the destinies of a community in a plural society such as ours. And for the first time, this joint paper, on the basis of available data, from different sources and their own sample surveys, draw attention to hitherto unsuspected aspects of the community. Their joint field surveys, especially those relating to the Muslim business community reveal a definite improvement in the conclusions reached. Statistical tables furnished by them, despite their limitations, impart an empirical basis to speculations on many aspects of the Muslim community in particular.

What makes an ethnic group a minority? And in what sense? Certain groups are undoubtedly minorities in numerical terms, well, that is simple arithmetic. But, numerical diminutiveness need not necessarily prevent a minority from being economically dominant and socially domineering. "However, it is difficult to be rigidly consistent in the use of this expression, since there are cases in which a Muslim community might be numerically inferior, but superior politically or socially. In such a case, the group cannot be considered a minority. This would apply for instance, to the Muslims in Mughal India. On the other hand, a Muslim community might be superior to the non-Muslims, but might be relegated to a position of

insignificance. . . . . In this case, the Muslims should be considered to be a minority. This was the case of Muslims of Sicily when it was invaded by the Normans in 1061, and is the case in Ethiopia and Tanzania today."* The Turks for well over 300 years never felt they were a minority when they ruled the Christian lands in the Balkans or in the Arab lands. And the negligible number of Englishmen who were engaged in planting, in business houses and in running the affairs of state in this country from 1815 – 1948 constituted the most dominant and influencial community who commanded the respect and admiration of the people. And during this Colonial regime the ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities of this country, not amounting to more than 25 per cent of the total population had a feeling of dominance and superiority over the vast majority of the Sinhala Buddhists because of the British policy of divide and rule. If the colonial phase of Afro-Asian history did not create such incongruous situations, it certainly hastened and encouraged such trends. Such minority dominance has not been peculiar to Sri Lanka and may be seen in most Afro-Asian countries and is a consequence of the fortuitous circumstances of history. And if the minorities tend to believe in the inherent, genetic and ethnic superiority of their respective groups then something should be wrong with their reasoning faculties. Such cerebral processes cannot but, eventually lead to racist "chosen people" mentality, culminating in violence. Despite the fact that Muslims of Sri Lanka constitute 5.7 per cent (1981 census) of the total population they continue to be a respectable and influential community. Whereas the Muslims who constitute 16 per cent of the population of U.S.S.R.,** hardly wield any significant influence at the federal level in that country.

In Sri Lanka, some of the religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities were economically and culturally dominant, hence politically influential right through the colonial period. As they dominated trade and commerce, finance and the plantation industry; the professions, higher echelons of administration and the services, and finally the educational establishments, they naturally wielded power, prestige and influence. This state of national disequilibrium, amounting to social injustice could not persist for long.

What has been happening in Sri Lanka since the dawn of Independence was an attempt to reverse this unjust situation in favour of the majority, for a restoration of their rights to land and employment, for education and access to the key professions and for a legitimate share in the cultural life

* The Muslim Minorities. M. Ali Kettani. Lond. 1979. pp. 5–6.

** Source: U. S. State Dept. Fact Book. The Muslim People – A World Ethnographic Survey 1978.

of the country, and for a restoration and revivalism of their cherished religious institutions and religious practices. And the minority groups, quite naturally have not been unmindful of their accumulated privileges. Their resistance overt and covert to preserve them, have regrettably led to a loss of sang-froid, turning social life abrasive. This situation is highly delicate. No people in the world, as a group have voluntarily renounced their material advantages or social privileges. An assiduous endeavour in all sincerity should be made by every community which constitutes the Sri Lankan nation, to co-operate with the state and seek a rational modus vivendi which would make this island home of ours, the Elysian abode that it was.

* * *

Unlike the ubiquitous Moors, the Malays of Sri Lanka are basically an urban community. Out of a total Malay population* of 43,459, the majority of them were concentrated in urban areas. A little over 36,000 of them were confined to Colombo, Hambantota, Kandy, Badulla and Kurunegala. This special preference for urban living was to influence the outlook, values and moods of the Malay community in a way, to clearly demarcate and distinguish them from the highly resilient and adaptable Moors.

Though the Malays of Sri Lanka share a common religious ideology with the other segments of the Muslim community in this country, they have right through, borne a distinct individuality of their own as an ethno-cultural group. Hence, despite their numerically diminutive position they had continued to resist the sway of the major communities to swamp their cultural traits. Consequently, the fate that befell the Portuguese Burghers, the Caffirs, the Mukkuvas and the Malayalees did not overtake the Malays. Malays constitute only 0.29 per cent of the country's population (as at the 1981 Census), yet, unlike many such smaller groups, the Malays continued to make their presence felt by the indelible impression they created and endure as a distinct ethno-cultural group within the Muslim community and the Sri Lankan nation. All Malays by religious persuasion are Muslims, for official purposes Malays are considered a separate ethnic stock. This ethno-cultural identity in no way impaired their religious fervour. Haply, the larger Moorish segment (7.12 per cent of the total population as at 1981 Census) of the Muslim community enabled the Malays to adhere to their religious credo with greater fidelity and saved them from the fate that befell the Malay community in South Africa.

* As at 9 Oct. 1971. Table 9, Census of Population 1971. Vol. II.

Quite contrary to the observation,* that the Malays happen to lose most of their original customs and traditions by following 'Moorish' practices in their cultural and social life, the Malays we suppose, have been tenaciously clinging to their own 'Kultur', until very recent times, when the dynamics of multi-national economics began to crumble the cultural identities and impose the drab tedium of homogeneity of goods, services and way of life and work.

Though most of the Malays did not enter the learned profession or take to trade and commerce in a big way, it cannot be denied that they had a penchant for jobs in the state sector, sterling companies and the plantation industry. As officers, their dedication to the institutions or the individuals whom they served was never in doubt. These Malays – a branch of the larger Mongoloid group of people – carried out the services entrusted to them almost with religious dedication. Their prowess and valour as 'firemen' in the Fire Brigade,** is recalled even today by the citizens of Colombo with romantic relish. They carried into their professional duties an imperious discipline and a Hellenic sense of heroism which compelled their masters to look at them admiringly.***

The Malay community unlike their Moorish counterparts had a proclivity for lively gaiety.**** Their womenfolk though not very particular about the purdah, conducted themselves with great Islamic demeanour and decorum. The Malays were remarkable for their 'Burmese Sarongs' and the 'Sonko' (batik caps), at least during festive occasions and in social gatherings. Like the pre-war Jews they were renowned for their gold teeth, but unlike them they were well known for their magnanimity. The Malays were generally allergic to trade and commerce, and unlike the Moors they had a great inclination for sports, especially soccer. Basically an urban community, which until recent times was endogamous – which practice aided the preservation of its ethnic and cultural identity. The instances of inter-marriages referred to by Percival in the 19th century were more the exception than the rule. Even in their culinary art, the Malays reveal a remarkable disparity which was a distinction from the Moorish cuisine.

* Dr. B. A. Hussainmiya. In his Seminar Paper, included in this Vol.

** Vide – Annual Reports of the Colombo Fire Brigade.

*** Vide – G.A.'s Diaries. Uva. 57/77 of Dec. 1915; 57/78 and 57/79. SLNA. – Vide – Colonial Despatches: 5/8/407–408 of Nov. 5, 1816 for an account of Malay Muhandiram; 5/10/51 of April 1819 for the role of Malays; an 5/9/466 for the conduct of Lt. Annan – SLNA. Also Vide. Dulling, H.H. – Sketches from Ceylon History. Col. for the heroic deeds of some Malays in the Police Force and the Army.

**** The Scope of Happiness. – A Personal Memoir. Vijayalakshmi Pandit. Lond. 1979. ch. 36. p. 280.

We concur with Dr. Hussainmiya, that the term 'Malay' is a misnomer in as much as the term 'Moor' is a misnomer. As most of the Malays in this island came from the Javanese island of the Indonesian Archipelago, it is rather curious as to why and how they came to be designated 'Malays'. An emerging power, as powerfully as it imposes its rule and might, also enforces its ways of thinking, values and mores, however erroneous. Likewise, earlier the Portuguese called others Mouro, which with time modified to 'Moors', which underwent currency and has come to be accepted, however misleading, even by the descendants of the Arabs of this island. In still earlier times, Greeks called the people of the Mediterranean coast south of Mount Carmel and to the west of river Jordan and Dead Sea, Philistines and the land itself Philistia (Gk. Philistia = the land of Palms). And the same Greeks called the present day Iraq as Mesopotamia (Gk. Mesopotamia = the land between the rivers) and came to be recorded as such in history. Alien values, nomenclature and concepts imposed from without touch only the fringe – the elite, and tend to lose their significance with the withdrawal or diminution of foreign power and influence. The mass of the people of a country remain uninfluenced by them. Thus, quite correctly, the Sinhala masses call the Malays Ja Minissu as they call the Moors Marakkala Minissu and the Coast Moors as Hambayas.

As for the origin of the Malays, we are on firm grounds from Dutch times when a plethora of documents become available. But it does not follow that Sri Lanka had no connection with the people of the Malay peninsula or the Indonesian Archipelago in earlier times. The Malays it is believed, were first drawn to Sri Lanka on their own initiative many centuries before the Dutch.* It is a learned conjecture, that Sri Lanka was not unknown to the sea-faring people of the East-Indian islands even in pre-Christian times.** Like the Phoenicians of the Mediterranean coast and the ancient Polynesians who moved out from the South Seas in pre-Christian era, these natives were indefatigable seamen who crossed the Indian ocean and the Arabian sea. It is these South Sea islanders who constitute the preponderant element amongst the people of Malagassy (Madagascar). Considering the vital location of Sri Lanka on this sea route and the vagaries of the wind and waves, which made the early navigators helpless, these early people could not have missed Sri Lanka in the course of their long and uncertain voyages. Coming down to later times, most literary sources concur that the arrival of Malays took place in the

* Ceylon. A Pictorial Survey of People and Arts. Raghavan, M. D. Colombo. 1962. Intro Ch. p. xxvi.

** Aspects of Sinhala Culture. Martin Wickremasinghe.

middle of the 13th century with the invasion of Chandrabanu, who really came from the Malay peninsula.* But the late Prof. Paranavitana's obsessive attempts to establish a far deeper involvement of the Malays in Sri Lankan history with the invasion of Chandrabanu has lost its cogency in the light of Dr. R. A. L. H. Gunewardena's contention.** There is absolutely no evidence pertaining to Malay settlement prior to the arrival of the Europeans. There is hardly any literary or epigraphical evidence of their existence as a distinct ethno-cultural group forming a segment of this country's population prior to the Dutch. Haply, the sparse proliferation of this ethnic minority in pre-European times if at all it existed was absorbed by the larger indigenous groups of Sinhalese and Tamils.

But the Malays who came with the Dutch were altogether different from the Malays who came along with Chandrabanu's invasion in the 13th century, in that the former were Muslims. This religious factor explains their cohesiveness as a group and their cultural valency. It has been ingenuously suggested that before the Dutch period (1658 – 1796), the Portuguese (1505 – 1658) had brought the Malays from the Moluccas. But Dr.Hussainmiya while refuting these rather staggering suggestions, safely concludes that, the nucleus of the present day Malay community has to be sought among the Malay settlers who came to Sri Lanka during and after the establishment of Dutch rule in Ceylon.

Indicated by the Sinhala terms Ja Minissu or Javaka by which they are referred to, is borne out by both literary and non-literary sources. These terms may indicate their possible arrival in this country initially from the island of Java. The bulk of them, perhaps came from this island, though there is evidence to confirm that at various stages, they were either brought in or came from many islands in the Indonesian Archipelago and the Straits of Malaya.

There is difference of opinion among scholars as to the earliest date of the arrival of the Malays in Sri Lanka. It is in the Culavamsa that the word Javaka appears, hence it provides the earliest literary reference to their arrival in the island. Thus the Culavamsa, *** which records the invasion of this island by the Javakas under Chandrabanu, is reported to have invaded Ceylon twice. The first invasion is believed to have taken place in the

* Culavamsa. LXXX. I. pp. 36–51.

** Ceylon and Malaysia. – A study of Prof. Paranavitana's Research on the Relations Between the Two Regions. By R. L. A. H. Goonewardena. UCR. Vol. xxv. Nos. 1–2. pp. 64.

*** Geiger, W; Culavamsa. Eng. Trans. LXXXIII, 35–37.

eleventh regnal year of Parakramabahu II, i.e. c 1247 A.D.; and the second eleven years later, i.e.c 1258 A.D.*

Non-literary evidence and inferential conclusions derived therefrom push the period of the Malays in this country to very early times. Pierre Dupont, basing his trend of investigations on the iconographical finds in Western Java and the Celebes, established a connection between Java and Ceylon as early as the 6th and 7th centuries A.D., and his discursive reasoning drives the period further back to the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. However, the evidence for the latter period appears untenable and has not gone unchallenged.** So the probable period of the arrival of the Malays was not earlier than the 6th or 7th century. Yet it is not clear under what circumstances they arrived in this country, as peaceful immigrants and settlers in search of new homes, or as aggressive colonialists and invaders motivated exclusively by economic interests or that they had no choice whatever, very much analogous to their descendants in a subsequent period under the Dutch.

It has been established that there was, some sort of cultural relations between Java and Ceylon in ancient times, and from this fact it is a matter of valid or permissible inference that cultural relationship presupposes economic and social relationship.***

Javakas or Malays prior to the 7th century could not have been Muslims, hence, there was not that ideological factor to have kept them apart from the major communities of Ceylon. Those Malays who arrived at early times and those who came subsequently with the invader Chandrabanu were undoubtedly absorbed into the native population of Ceylon. In any case there is no literary evidence or otherwise to indicate their separate existence in this country as a distinct ethno-cultural group.

It is believed, that place names such as, Chavakachcheri and Chavankottai in the northern peninsula of Sri Lanka are reminiscent of Javanese presence in this country, probably in the 13th century. It has been ingenuously suggested that even, Jaffna (Yalpanam) is derived from Java Patanam.****

* Liyanagamage. A. – The Decline of Polonnaruwa and the Rise of Dambadeniya. pp. 151–152, – Dept. of Cultural Affairs. Col. 1968.

** Mirella Levi D'Ancona. – Amaravati, Ceylon and Three Imported Bronzes; The Arts Bulletin, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1; 1952. pp. 1–17.

*** Vide – 'New Evidence on Cultural Relations between Java and Ceylon in Ancient Times'; by Casparis, J. G. de. in Artibus Asia, Vol. XXIV, 1961. pp. 234–248.; Also Paranavitana, S. Ceylon and Malaysia, Col. 1966; Paranavitana's views on this have been already disputed as referred to above.

**** The Sri Lanka Malays. – A Brief Historical Sketch. By. M. Murad Jayah.

The bulk of those who constituted the Malay community of this country were either brought or came over to Ceylon during Dutch times. Though the Portuguese had preceded the Dutch in their trading ventures in the Far East, the Dutch were the first European nation to make a deep penetration of the Indonesian Archipelago. They ventured into the eastern seas in the early 17th century, making Batavia in the island of Java their headquarters. The Javanese who enlisted in the Dutch army were sent over to Ceylon at various times as the necessity for their services arose. Still others who had surrendered or were captured were exiled as they belonged to the nobility or royalty. Thus a large number of Javanese royalty who had rebelled against the Dutch were exiled to Ceylon in 1723 at the end of the battle of Batavia. At the end of Dutch rule in Ceylon in 1796, it is believed, that some soldiers and most members of the royalty resolved to return to Java, while the rest were domiciled in this country. Though the ancestors of the present Malay community of this country hailed from many islands in the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malayan peninsula, the great majority of them were undoubtedly of Javanese origin. And it would not be altogether incorrect to maintain that a large percentage of them are descendants of the highest strata of Javanese society, such as the royalty, nobility and the gentry. Their unstinted loyalty, valour and heroism stood in their favour and the British enlisted most of them in the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. By 1873 this regiment was disbanded and most of them sought employment in the police, the prison department and the fire brigade service.*

A cursory glance of the minutes of the Dutch Political Council,** reveals that besides Javanese chieftains, most of these exiles were political rebels who belonged to such categories as, 'kings, sultans, princes and rajas'. Further, one gleans from this record that a large number of them had come here voluntarily to serve the Dutch, perhaps in the military establishments.

The political exiles lived in solitary confinement under strict surveillance on a meagre allowance and a minimal dry ration, which made their life one of excruciating travail. One finds the ladies selling their personal possessions and jewellery to sustain a bare existence, and exiled kings dying in penury and indigence and their dependants finding no wherewithal to conduct the obsequies.*** Eventually they came to be administered, as

* A History of the Ceylon Police. – Dep, A.C Vol. 2. 1866–1913. p. 70.
** Proceedings of the D.P.C. of 8 March 1788. SLNA. 1/200.
*** Proceedings of the D.P.C. Colombo. 20 Sept. 1724. SLNA. 1/58.

Dr. Hussainmiya points out under the Department of Orphans and Charitable Funds when the British took over the maritime provinces from the Dutch in 1796. The only redeeming feature in this otherwise dreary and despairing existence of the Malays was the presence of a substantial Moorish community, with whom they shared their religious ideology. And the Moorish gesture of goodwill and camaraderie, perhaps had a cathartic effect on the distraught Malays. It is evident, that the princely exiles and the members of their families have had close and warm relations with the Moors, which greatly enriched their religious sensibility and enlivened them from their despair and despondency.

Those exiles who were convicted of crimes and considered dangerous were chained and imprisoned. And when after 1760, as war developed with the Kandyan kingdom, out of the acquitted criminal deportees a Malay company of 120 was formed. The inflow of this category of convicts continued and perhaps more Malay companies were added. Thus Ceylon in a way became the Botany Bay of the Malays. After subsequent process of straining and sifting, those whom the Dutch authorities released continued to serve the Dutch in many capacities in the army department.* Thus under adventitious circumstances the Malays acquired a martial discipline which stood them in good stead and marked them out from other segments of the Muslim community.

Dr. Hussainmiya in his well documented paper, brings out the different categories of Malays in numerical strength who compounded the Malay community of Ceylon. While the general view is, that the present day Malays derived their ancestry from Malay princes, in actual fact a large fraction of this community was composed of Malays who appear to have enlisted as soldiers and who participated in many battles and sieges in this country. Malay troops participated in the storming of Galle in 1640, Colombo in 1655/56, Mannar and Jaffna in 1658. Malay soldiers took part in the many wars waged by the Dutch against Kandy. Malay soldiers were stationed at Sitavaka and Mullaitivu garrison on the eastern coast.** Further Dr. Hussainmiya establishes that the ancestors of the Ceylon Malays were composed of almost all major ethnic elements or groups of the eastern Archipelago, from amongst whom the Dutch enlisted into their soldiery. Hence, a martial trait as referred to earlier should have been more pronounced in the early settlers, which explains their predilection

* Memoirs of Julius van Gollenesse. 1747–1754. Eng. Trans. By S. Arasaratnam.

** Raven Hart. 1959. pp. 69–70. and Minutes of D.P.C. Col. 18 Jan. 1788. SLNA 1/1793.

even under the British rule for the services rather than for trade and commerce or even white collar work.

Those Malays who were recruited directly into the Dutch military services were of distinguished origin, at least at the higher levels. While in this island, there were instances when the Malays took Sinhala and Malabari wives. Such instances should be considered rare, and therefore their ethnic identity was not altogether lost. But with the passage of time, the singularity of this ethnic group came to be affected due to many factors, mainly economic and social and the Malays were constrained to contract exogamous marriages. Yet, such exogamous marriages were mostly within the Muslim community, mainly with the Moors.

Malays seem to have appeared rather dreadful and ferocious,* especially to the Sinhalese who were reported to have been more afraid of them than the Europeans. This gives the clue as to why the Dutch preferred the Malays to be employed in very many capacities in their military establishments. Apart from the convict settlers, soldiers and political exiles who constituted the Malay community of this country, Dr. Hussainmiya calls our attention to (quoting sources from SLNA) to Malay slaves sent down by the Batavian government, who were employed by the company and private individuals. It is reported that a large number of them were also organized into a Malay company in 1763.

If the language that these people spoke was the primary factor which brought about a group identity amongst the heterogenous people from the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay peninsula, the religion they professed, namely Islam, churned them into a much wider fraternity with the Moorish community in this country. Language and religion therefore, appear to be the two enduring factors responsible for the crystallization of the Ceylon Malay community. Dr. Hussainmiya emphasizes the importance of the existence of the Moorish community in this country, if not for whom, it is not unlikely that the fate that befell the Malays in South Africa, would probably have overtaken them.

By the middle of the 18th century out of the demobilized soldiers from the descendants of the political exiles, a 'free Javanese community' emerged, which took to various forms of economic activities to earn their livelihood. Market gardening, rattan weaving and the collection of local produce such as arecanut and even petty trading seem to have engaged their attention.

* Raven Hart, quoting Christopher Schwitser.

Though remaining a discrete ethno-cultural group, the Sri Lankan Malays are well integrated within the Sri Lankan polity and within it to the Muslim community. Under the dynamics of social change, the Malays in addition to their traditional employment in the specific spheres of government service have branched out into new areas such as education, medicine, trade and commerce, etc. They have also excelled in politics, sports and social service.

Though subsumed under the general denomination 'Muslim' as a religious classification, the Malays are ethnically, culturally and linguistically a distinct segment of the Muslim community. Rapid socio-economic changes since Independence, and especially since 1956 and 1977, have compelled the Malays as well as all minorities to abandon most of their long cherished ways in favour of homogeneity in material culture and life-styles. The two years, 1956 and 1977, should be considered great 'divides' in our recent political history, as they engendered tremendous political and economic changes which in turn have unleashed incredible socio-cultural changes. Malays too have been caught up in this dynamic transformation. Greater frequency of inter-marriages of Malays with the Moors has resulted in the rapid replacement of spoken Malay by Tamil, Sinhala and English.* There is nothing specifically 'Malay' in the attire of the Malays of today to distinguish them from the rest of the Muslims or the Sri Lankans generally. The exotic beauty of the Sri Lankan society, which arose from the cultural variations of her people is being rapidly replaced by a dull homogeneity of commodities, services and values generated by the transnational society of our time. It has been suggested,** that a comparative study of Sri Lankan Malay with Javanese and Bhasa Indonesia should prove profitable in many ways to understand the Malay community of this country.

* * *

Mr. Asker Moosajee, in a brief though a useful paper placed before the seminar, presents a studied account of the smaller segments of the Muslim community of this country of North Indian origin, such as the Memons, Bohras, Khojas and 'Afghans'; and makes a passing reference to the Coast Moors of South Indian origin. All these ethno-cultural groups are from North India, mainly the north west of India unlike the Coast Moors and

* In Kalyani – Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya. Vol. One. Nos. 1 & 2. Oct. 1982. Vide. Under. Kinship Terminology of Sri Lankan Malay. pp. 207–224.

** Ibid.

Malabaris who came from the Coromandel and the Malabar coast respectively. With the exception of the Coast Moors all others are recent arrivals in this country and belong to the business community.

Imperial Britain consolidated her position over the sub-continent around the second half of the 19th century after the ruthless suppression of the Indian mutiny of 1857. The concept of a unified India, under one single authority, bounded by natural frontiers such as the Sulaiman range, the Hindu Kush, the Himalayas, the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, is a recent British creation. Even under the Mauryas at the height of their power or even under the martially supreme Moghuls, the southern Dravidian states, though they might have been under their cultural influence to some degree were never under their political suzerainty or economic dominance. Thus a unified India is a 19th century phenomenon and owes its emergence exclusively to astute British diplomacy, state-craft, administrative policy and the judicious and limited use of military operations. The three sovereign states of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh along with Burma and Ceylon in south Asia, came under effective British control around the middle of the 19th century. And until 1890 Burma was administered from India. Hence there was a free flow of men and capital within this region under the British, as all people of this region became British citizens. Only exceptions were Goa, Daman and Dieu – the Portuguese possessions; Pondicherry and Mahe – the French possessions (which were ceded to Britain). Their diminutive magnitude both in territory and population did not impede the British Imperial power in this region. It was in this context that the **laissez-faire** policy of the free flow of men and capital occurred within this region. It was under such circumstances that the North Indian Muslim communities and the South Indian Coast Moors and the Muslim Malabaris began to arrive as entrepreneurs, businessmen and financiers in the 19th century. All these communities who entered this country were not exclusively Muslims, but this cross-cultural seminar was directed to investigate primarily those of the Islamic faith. Unlike the indentured South Indian labour who were brought in large numbers to the coffee and later to the tea plantations who were exclusively Dravidian, Hindu and mostly Tamils, the Muslim communities that reached the island from India came over to be engaged in the sector of trade and commerce. These Muslims on arrival in this country found their compatriots in the Ceylon Moors and Ceylon Malays with whom they felt the solidarity of the Muslims as a community, yet in an ethno-cultural sense they remained discrete entities. Linguistic, ethnic and other cultural variables and to some extent endogamous practices set them apart from one another while uniting them at a different and higher

level of religion in one Ummah (Community). Ethno-cultural propensity and ethico-religious proclivity are equal realities and are coeval in the life of a community and in no way contradict or counterpose themselves to the fraternity of the Ummah.

These North Indian business communities, unlike the Coast Moors or the Afghans came over with their families, hence they took an abiding interest in the land of their adoption. Their philanthrophic activities and the architectural monuments they created or helped to erect and their participation in the political life of Sri Lanka, and the participation of their men in the professions of law, medicine, accountancy, etc. are all recounted by Mr. Moosajee in his paper. Their finance capital, expertise, acumen and acuteness in trade and commerce did go a long way in organizing the import-export trade and the wholesale trade in this country, which was a pressing need when the country from the middle of the 19th century was opening in the new direction of plantation industries.

Most of the North Indian mercantilist communities except the Memon belonged to the Shia sect. A knowledge of the broad division of Sunni and Shia, and within the Shia the sub-divisions leading to the Ismaili and the Khoja community based on the inscrutable and esoteric imamate differences and succession may be useful for a clear perception of the Shi'ite variants. These subtle and intriguing nuances in Shi'ite mataphysical diffractions and their broad differences with the Sunni, however elusive are worth pursuing for a proper understanding of the Bohra community of Sri Lanka, as they number more than a million in India and abroad. Daudis, Sulaimanis and the Aliyas are the three main strands of the Bohra community of which the precursor was the Ismailiya community, which itself is one of the many sects of the Shi'ite.

These theological intricacies need not detain us here, save in so far as they enable us to understand them as Shi'ites, which may partly explain why their social intercourse with other Muslims is restrained, as there are no Shi'ites among the Malays, Coast Moors or Ceylon Moors. Nevertheless most of the Muslim traders who settled in Sri Lanka integrated themselves into the mainstream of the Muslim community, though as Bohras they remain orthodox, exclusive and reserved. Their isolationism may be a matter for sociological investigation – to go back to their roots, – their origins, ethnicity, language, and cultural traditions are different from other segments of the Muslim community. This is yet another area of research for future investigators.

The so-called 'Afghans', Mr. Moosajee refers to and who at one stage constituted a colourful little segment of the Muslim community, seem to have left this country without leaving a trace. Since they had no serious commitment to this land, as they were here in their professional capacity as money-lenders, their relationship with the other Muslims did not extend beyond the precincts of the mosque. Unlike the Bohras or the Memons, the Afghans never brought their families to this country, in that they were like the Coast Moors. The appellation 'Afghan' is a misnomer as Mr. Moosajee points out. They were really Baluchis from the land skirting the North West Frontier. As they lived on usury (Riba) they operated only in the main towns. But to say that these Afghans were divorced from the local populace and took no interest in the life of this country would be meaningless and misleading in the light of recorded evidence.* Some of the Afghans married locally and integrated themselves with the local population. Being numerically negligible the few Afghans who intermarried with Malays and Moors were assimilated into the Ummah. There were also Afghans who were absorbed into the postal service of this country. And some of them at least by their services to their fellowmen endeared themselves to the community. "Mr. Moomin Khan, an Afghan, 40 years of age living in Passara. . . . held in high esteem by the people . . . . son of a postmaster, Passara." Thus concludes an observation of the Government Agent, Uva, (dated Nov. 21, 1914).

The origin of the Coast Moors was perhaps, in no way different to the Ceylon Moors. Both were originally descendants of the Arabs. Their difference lies in their historic background and subsequent cultural evolution. Their respective origins go back to the pre-Islamic Semites, in both cases reinforced by Muslim Arabs from the 7th century A.D. In the case of the Coast Moors unlike in the case of North Indian Muslim communities or the Ceylon Moors, the magnitude of the Dravidian component was so strong that further conversion, intermarriage and environmental influences began to smother the Arab element, and a veneer of Dravidian rituals, practices and symbolism continued to persist among the Coast Moors. The insular position of our country and the ethno-linguistic and the cultural differences of the Sinhalese and the frequent visits of the Arabs to Sri Lankan ports especially prior to the 13th century enabled the naturalized Arab community of Sri Lanka to retain a distinct identity.

This tended to maintain the purity of Arab ethnicity and related cultural traits of the Sri Lankan Moors. There was hardly any attempt at conversion of Aryan-Sinhala Buddhists to Islam. Nor is there any instance of

*Vide – G.A.'s Diaries – Uva 57/76 of 21.11.1914. – SLNA.

recorded evidence to show mass conversion of Dravidians in this country to the Islamic faith. In the Indonesian Archipelago, Malaysia, the Maldives and in greater parts of India and China, Islam spread not only through trade, but through the missionary activities of saints followed by mass conversion and intermarriage for which there is ample recorded evidence and the continuity of an oral tradition. Sri Lankan scene on the other hand does not depict the story of mass conversion or intermarriage. Saints or divines are occasionally sent to this island or come on their own to cater to the spiritual needs of the followers of the Prophet. This contrasting position ensured the perpetuity of Arab connections of the Sri Lankan Moors and to a great extent prevented if not minimised ethnic admixture. This state of affairs continued till the 13th century, when Sri Lankan connections with the Abbaside caliphate should have ended with the destruction of Baghdad in 1258 by Hulagu Khan. Confusion and darkness set in the Arab world for some time. Disorder and uncertainty in the north west of India resulting from the invasions of Irano-Turkic and Afghan people's beginning with Mahmud of Ghazni around 1000 A.D., led to the rapid growth of the South Indian states of Cola, Sri Vijayan trading activities, subsequent rise of Pandians and the glory of Vijayanagar. As trading communities the Sri Lankan Muslim community probably had very close relations with the Indian Muslim community of South India. And it was with the eclipse of the Baghdad caliphate and the North Indian confusions beginning with the 11th century that the Sri Lankan Muslim connections with the Indian Moors or Coast Moors of the Coromandel coast begins to take a new and crucial turn. It becomes crucial because, this relationship was to bring about a cultural shift among the Ceylon Moors. It was from the great port of Kayal of the Pandians that the Coast Moors set out on their trading ventures. This port was visited by Marco Polo twice in 1288 and in 1293 and described it as 'a great and noble city'. And trade leading to cultural intercourse between the Coast Moors and Sri Lankan Moors gathers momentum in the subsequent centuries, leading to almost collaboration in religious and cultural life, especially after the consolidation of British raj on the sub-continent and in the island. In Ceylon, these South Indian Muslims who came to be designated by the British as Coast Moors to distinguish them from the Ceylon Moors came to take up business activity in the wholesale and retail distributive trade of the island, and by the end of the 19th century they had penetrated to almost every remote hamlet and village in this country. By virtue of their economic dominance they had come to wield tremendous influence with the British authorities.* What is relevant to us at this stage, is that since

* Armond de Souza. Riots of 1915. pp. 30–31.

British times a progressive increase and an effective presence of the Coast Moors of this country, and South Indian rituals, social practices and symbolism began to infect the Ceylon Moors, through most of the Masjids and Madrasas, some of which they built and maintained. Their benign contribution to the Muslims of this country was nullified by their deleterious and Dravidian cultural traits which began to percolate among the Ceylon Moors. Of the many such reprehensible practices from which the Ceylon Moors are unable to extricate themselves, the dowry system is just one. We shall not digress into those aspects.

While the smaller Shi'ite Bohra community numbering 1,800 and the Hanafi Sunni community amounting to no more than 3,000 (1981 Census figures) had made this island their home, thus becoming a part of the Sri Lankan polity; the Coast Moors, despite their mass exodus since 1948, still numbering nearly 29,406 as a group continued to be indifferent to the social realities in this country. There is a tendency among them now, as among the Malays for assimilation with the Ceylon Moors by intermarriage. Until very recent times they remained birds of passage, with no abiding interest in this land and her people. They had been here for a considerably longer period than those small North Indian communities, yet they never thought of making this island their permanent home. Ethnocentric bias motivated them to maintain a group solidarity amongst themselves, and they tended to remain aloof socially not only from the Sinhala community, but to a considerable extent even from the Moors of this land. Only religion bound them to the Muslims and no more. This alienation and estrangement led to irresponsible and impudent social behaviour culminating in the riots of 1915.* "The Coast Moors have always been unpopular in Ceylon. Like the Jews in Europe", whom says Davy, "in some respects they resemble". "They live scattered among the people, aloof and alien, they incur from the permanent population the same feeling that was aroused by the Jews of Europe in the middle ages", thus records Mr. E. B. Denham of the Ceylon Civil Service in his Census Report for 1911. The heyday of the Coast Moors of this country was under the British era, when their numerical strength, social influence and economic power was tremendous. The Indian and Pakistani Citizenship Act of 1949 and the Ceylonization of Trade disastrously affected them and decimated their numbers and influence. Yet they remained formidable in numbers even at the 1981 Census. Perhaps, through emigration and assimilation this category of people seem to be rapidly disappearing like the Afghans, Kaffirs and the Mukkuwas of the past.

* Armond de Souza op.cit.

Before the commencement of the seminar, when it was suggested to Prof. Md. Mauroof that he should make a sociological approach to the subject, he had acquiesced, but quite contrary to anticipation, he produced something altogether different. His paper relates to the Muslim minorities of Sri Lanka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Lakshavdip, toward a programme for research of their economic, social and cultural conditions. Quite ironically, this paper turned out to be really fruitful by calling our attention to hitherto unsuspected areas for future researches. As it purports to be a sort of guideline for tomorrow's researchers in this field, it stimulates more reflection than the information it conveys.

He directs the attention of the reader to focus his study on the eight million or so Muslims living in the contiguous lands of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the islands of Sri Lanka and Lakshavdip. To isolate this study to any single of the territories referred to, would, we suppose impair a holistic and anthropological view of the problem in view of the many kindred affinities among the Muslims of this region. Hence, we can well conceive the separation of this region from the rest of south east Asia. He emphasizes the commonality of the Muslims of this region, especially the linguistic similarities – they have common Dravidian roots. Besides, all of them as Muslims share a common Arabic vocabulary, which distinguish them from the rest of the people of this region.

Dr. Md. Mauroof, quite rightly laments the paucity of reliable information on the socio-economic and cultural life of the Muslims of this region. No surveys and researches have been specifically conducted, particularly regarding the Muslims of this region. Basing his observations on Peter Mayer's writings (1981), he questions the very methodologies adopted in the past on the subject. Another fallacy he counters, is the current belief that Muslims are traders and merchants. Such a theory does not square with facts; quoting authorities he cites evidence for the region to which he focuses attention. Pertaining to Sri Lanka, he maintains, that larger concentrations of Muslim population in this country are in the agricultural and not in the commercial region. Readers would observe from other papers in this volume, that this view is further confirmed by a profusion of evidence, which would show that though trade and commerce was the forte of the Muslims, they are oriented to a broad spectrum of economic activities and professions to which they were motivated or from which they departed due to varying vicissitudes of historic circumstances. Trading reputation of the Muslims has been misconstrued to arrive at naive beliefs, that all Muslims are merchants and traders, hence, by implication opulent. It is an **a'priori** assumption unsupported by empirical evi-

dence such as sample surveys and demographic data. Scientific dissipation of such fallacies should be considered some of the tasks of future investigators in this field.

He makes a judicious observation to the excess of females over males in this region, and perhaps by inference alludes to more females taking to employment resulting from an exodus of males – fathers, husbands and brothers finding employment overseas. This may be true in large-scale features to the region he refers to, including Sri Lanka. Its precise confirmation will have to await further research, survey and investigation. Nevertheless, he draws our attention to a contemporary development that has been sweeping through this region, influencing all communities including the Muslims. Another such recent development he refers to is the Land Reform Act of Kerala and the Land Reform Legislation in Sri Lanka. And it is his opinion that they aid subsistence and cash-crop cultivators who form the majority of the toilers among the nearly 8 million Muslims in this region.

Examining the problem of education-employment in this region, he wonders to what extent the type of education imparted would enable the Muslims in this region to alleviate themselves from the humiliation and sufferings of poverty. And he quite rightly drives home the point, that the type of liberal education, with its emphasis on humanities, imparted in this region cannot be expected to reduce the social and economic inequalities. A shift in emphasis is envisaged from the liberal arts to a technology-oriented curriculum if the aim of education is, mainly to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of the community. Prof. Mauroof directs our attention (quoting Report of the Backward Classes Commission, Tamil Nadu. In 3 Vol. Madras: Govt. of Tamil Nadu) to discrimination against Muslim admission to colleges managed by Christian missionaries.

The Muslims of this region have been belated in their realization of the importance of education. And actually when they did realize it, the educational system itself had changed from liberal arts and the humanities to science and technology, from formal to non-formal education. At this juncture, education itself will have to be viewed pragmatically, from a utilitarian perspective. But to realize those objectives and to bring the Muslims of this country on a par with other communities, require technological know-how, capital and expertise, all of which are beyond and outside their reach. Awareness of the problem is no solution to it. How the community would procure the necessary requisites to impart a technological and a job-oriented education to their growing youths is Prof. Mauroof's big question.

There is a misconception that at least in Sri Lanka the Muslims had obviated their backwardness in education since 1956, especially since 1960, because of special privileges and legislations meant to eliminate the accumulated discrimination of the ages. The evidence of some of these legislations may be correct but not the conclusion. That the spurious nature of such contentions have been statistically proved false, is confirmed by a preliminary analysis (cited by Prof. Mauroof) conducted by Dr. P. Wilson of the Vidyodaya University.

If the Muslims wish to catch up with the rest of the communities in this country, thereby help create a contented Sri Lankan nation, they should cease to look to the state with a litany of grievances as they have been used to do in the past. Like the rest of the nation they must evolve their own strategy based on a scientific analysis of their own problems in the sphere of education, pool their resources and shore up to their responsibilities. It is in this way that the Muslims should prove to be more useful and less of a drag on the nation.

* * *

Civilized life tends to get legalized. Human relationship begins to take its basis on the foundation of law. Inalienable rights and properties come to be recognized in civilized societies and all citizens are treated as equal before the law. Even in ancient times this need for a legal basis for civilized living was acknowledged and we can read it in the ancient codes such as those of Code Hammurabi of the second millenium B.C., the Thalmudic and Rabbinic law, and in the laws of Solon in ancient Greece, in Roman and Byzantine law. Among the ancients, before the advent of Islam, Romans had developed a comprehensive system of law. But Shariah (law) in Islam does not recognize a line of demarcation between the realm of God and the realm of Ceasar. A Ceasar, a Caliph, an emperor and Sultan are only vicegerents of God. The authority vested in them is an Amanat (Trust) of Allah. Hence, the fountain head of law in Islam is Allah Himself. The primary sources of law in Islam are therefore, the Quran and Sunna (practices of the Prophet). Man is not only responsible for his actions and answerable to law in this world, but accountable to God in the hereafter. Therefore, the Muslims as a community, right from the days of the Prophet developed a deep civic sense to appeal to, comply with and abide by the law. Hence, law itself developed into a great discipline in Islam. There are four schools of thought in Islamic Jurisprudence. These four schools were founded by Abu Haniffa (699-767), Malik ibn Anas (710 - 795), Muhammad Ash Shafi (767 - 820) and Ahmed ibn Hanbal (780 - 855).

These four distinguished jurists developed the elaborate structure of Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) to what it is today – a pride of the Ummah. Their interest in religion caused them to survey, all fields of contemporary activities including the field of law from an Islamic angle and to impregnate the realm of law with religious injunctions and ethical imperatives. Hence, many rules of the Sharia (Islamic Law), particularly the law relating to family and in the law of inheritance and every other aspect of life and conduct such as hygiene, worship and ritual, man's relationship with other men and of state with state, were in the nature of things, based on the Quran and on the example of Muhammad from the very beginning. Herein lies the broad difference between the Sharia and all other systems of law in this world. As the Medinite community of the Prophet rapidly expanded to a world Ummah, Muslim jurists enriched the Sharia by evolving two more sources namely Ijma (Consensus) and Qiyas (Analogy). Regulation of life by the Sharia imparts to Muslim thought and consciousness a remarkable sense of identity as Islamic law itself is one of the most important sources for the investigation of Islamic society.

The four schools of thought in Islamic jurisprudence are neither mutually exclusive nor antithetical. They illuminate interpretation and facilitate the administration of justice in Islam. Muslims according to their tradition, convention, customs and history prefer to be treated under a given school. Sri Lankans, as most Asians belong to the Shafi school of thought. And this adherence to the Sharia by the early Arab settlers and their descendants, the Moors, under the influence of the Ulema (the learned) through the Jamat (the congregation) and mosques is another cohesive factor which consolidated the identity of the Muslims in this country from the earliest times. Mr. Farouque with admirable transparency delineates, how the Muslims of this country, managed to retain, develop and gain recognition for the Sharia under successive regimes, as it related to inheritance, matters of succession and other incidents occasioned by death; matrimony, divorce, maintenance and the care of orphans; and of Wakf or charitable trust and management of mosques. Muslim law is not confined to property and liberty, however tangible and meaningful they might be, but considers for its treatment the entire gamut of human activities and relates them to the world beyond the grave. Thus Sharia regulates and governs the mundane and spiritual life of men. It is based on the Islamic vision of life. That life itself is a trust and it does not end with the grave. Sharia is not only related to securing formal justice, but it is related to ethics and has eschatological implications.

Thus from the beginning, the life of the Muslims in this country as in every country in this world came to be regulated by the Sharia. While being integrated to the social fabric of this country, the binding forces of the Sharia made them feel at a religo-ethical dimension distinct from the other communities, as they continued to regulate their civil transactions in accordance with the Sharia.

It will be observed, that unlike the Portuguese, there was an element of ambivalence in the Dutch treatment of the Muslims in their commercial policies. This attitude of the teutonic Dutch made them recognize Asian customary and religious laws. Thus we find that governor Falck in 1770 extends the Islamic code of marriage and succession laws as it operated in the East-Indies to Sri Lanka. This gain made by the Muslims during Dutch rule was not lost on the conquest of the maritime provinces of Ceylon by the British in 1796, as a proclamation of 1799 by the British governor of the time upheld the Dutch position pertaining to the special laws of the Muslims as incorporated by the Dutch.

British policy also in this country, had been to respect the customary laws relating to civil matters. Hence, the British gave the widest publicity among the Muslims of this country to Falck's Code. As this code has gained the approval of the ulema, the British had no problem over this code with the Muslims. By 1852 the code was extended to the Muslims throughout the island. The code came to be accepted as a part of the island's statutory law even by the Supreme Court. Mr. Farouque's paper shows how efforts to obviate certain deficiencies of the code by attempts to extend Roman-Dutch law of intestate succession and not Muslim law was averted. Then the development of Muslim law relating to marriages, divorce, maintenance, guardianship, gifts and custody of children in conformity with the Sharia vivified Muslim consciousness which enhanced the perception of a Sri Lankan Muslim identity. In the evolution of this identity, religion, ethnicity and language have all played their roles. This paper sets out, to trace the role played by Islamic law in the formation of Muslim identity. The Akbar Committee Report of 1928 and the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Ordinance of 1929 are just two of the milestones which consolidated and advanced Muslim law in this country. The Ordinance of 1929 was a recognition of the Muslim law of Marriage and Divorce and the Ordinance of 1931 acknowledged Muslim law in respect of Inheritance. Muslims continued to seek state recognition of the validity of the various aspects of personal laws, thereby advancing their distinctive cultural identity. The 1931 Ordinance relating to Intestate succession and Wakf (Muslim Charitable Trust) was superseded by the

Muslim Mosques and Charitable Trusts or Wakf Act of 1956. The upshot of this Act was the establishment of a separate department of Muslim Affairs. And the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1951 by giving exclusive jurisdiction to Quazis over marriage and divorce elevated their social prestige and influence.

The concept of a Sri Lankan Muslim identity is a consequence of their religio-ethical consciousness. And this consciousness has been the invariant characteristic of the Muslims which generated their specific identity in combination with other variable such as language, ethnicity and many cultural traits. Even during early times, these people had a clear sense of identity as Muslims of this country. Despite their integration at a structural level with the Sinhala Buddhists they continued to retain a discrete identity of their own as Muslims. In the course of the seminar discussions, Dr. Devaraja observed that the "Muslim consciousness existed right through their existence in Sri Lanka. . . . . That even under the Kandyan kings there was no cultural assimilation. Muslims maintained their religion, they maintained their legal system even under the Kandyan kings. . . . . " And this paper on, 'The Islamic Law in Sri Lanka', by Mr. Farouque, reveals how a series of statutory protection were either extended to or secured by the Muslims of this country, for the administration of Islamic law, which as we have observed earlier have gone a long way to reinforce Muslim consciousness of their identity.

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Dr. Wijaya Samaraweera makes a pointed reference to the absence of self-reliance and self-sufficiency in the Muslim revivalist movement of this country, in the late 19th century, which in contrast to the Hindu and Buddhist revivalism of the same period, was accordingly devoid of that 'inner reservoir of strength.' He refers to the collective memory and self-identity of the two social groups – Hindus and Buddhists, which stretch back to pre-Christian times. Hence, the adherents of these groups could claim to possess 'a considerable reservoir of inner resources which they could draw upon in meeting the challenges they faced in the 19th century.'

The perception of Hindu and Buddhist revivalism drawing their inspiration from an inner reservoir of their respective collective consciousness stretching back to ancient times is historically indisputable. Islam which is the latest of the world's religions, certainly cannot have a tradition older than its age, nevertheless, the adherents of that religion cannot be devoid of a collective consciousness and an 'inner reservoir of strength' as the

Hindus and the Buddhists. The Muslims of the entire world constitute a single Ummah (Community). And the Muslims of Sri Lanka is just a detachment of that all-embracing Ummah. This prevailing mood of the Muslims of the world in no way makes them disloyal to the country of their birth or to the people amongst whom they live.

If the arrival in Ceylon of Arabi Pasha inspired and activated the Muslim revivalist movement, that affirms the internationalist character of the Muslim Ummah. In as much as Arabi Pasha inspired the Sri Lankan Muslims, we know that Arabi's nationalist feelings were stimulated by Jamaldeen Afghani — that once again affirms the global character of the Muslim Ummah. To every member of the Muslim community, an uncompromising and undeviating monotheism is a commitment instilled into them from the cradle to the grave. La ilaha Illallah (there is no God but Allah) is whispered into the ears of every new born Muslim infant. And it is the last utterance of every Muslim when his final hour strikes. It explains why the Portuguese, the Dutch and even the British were disenchanted with the Muslims of this country, as their proselytizing efforts could not win converts from among the Muslims as they did from the Hindus and the Buddhists. The lure of material advantage and social prestige held aloft by the imperial masters to the apostates in no way deflected the Muslims from their faith. Despite the great 'reservoir of inner strength' and discipline imposed by an ancient tradition than Islam, evengelization was a great success among the Hindus and Buddhists.

Muslim defiance to the seductive charm of proselytization resulted in economic regression and social immobility to the community for nearly 450 years. And we suppose, in the discernment of the Muslims any sacrifice was worth for the preservation of their faith. Muslims avoided secular education in Christian schools because they were aware unlike the Sinhalese and the Tamils that the secular advantages could not be obtained without a loss of their faith and culture. "Every half an hour the class had to repeat a short prayer in praise of the Virgin Mary, and I got accustomed to Catholic ways,. . . . . " Anagarika Dharmapala*. And we also gather that by the age of 12 the influence of religion of the school was so abiding that he began to read the Bible 4 times a day. At a later stage, as he was growing from boyhood to youth, by introspection as it were, when young Dharmapala realized what was overtaking him that he resented the practice of consumption of liquor by his teachers and became repulsive of pork

* Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon. — By G. Obeysekera, Modern Ceylon Studies. Vo. 1/1, (1970), Peradeniya. Sri Lanka.

eaters. "The dirt pigs eats is disgusting. These fellows must be dirty." And he became critical of the Bible. "I became a Biblical critic in the boarding school, and I was threatened with expulsion if I continued to attack Jesus Christ."* We crave the indulgence of the reader for this digression. We intend no malice to any religious denomination of this country. The foregoing reflections of one of the foremost Buddhist leaders of the revivalist and nationalist movement of Ceylon graphically illustrates, why, the Muslims preferred to avoid the snares concealed in the 'enlightened' secular education of the West with the sole purpose of preserving their faith.

This explains why the Muslims had nothing to revitalise and revive in their religion – it had remained intact for well over 1400 years. But of course, the Muslims, unlike the Tamils and the Sinhalese had to pay a very big price for neglecting secular education. Muslims suddenly realized, especially under the British, how backward they were in the realm of education. And quite naturally, Muslim revivalism was less articulate as it had to commence in the field of education. Sheer necessity of a society in transition in a dynamic world demanded that a secular content be added to the hitherto Muslim education which had been purely theological. Raising of the level of secular education in a Muslim atmosphere was, under the British possible and necessary for the economic amelioration of the community. In such a context there was no necessity for Muslim revivalism to develop political overtones. And they had no enclaves or 'traditional homeland', nor an imperious position in the human geography of the land for their revivalism to acquire such political overtones. And they left such expressions to be articulated by the national leaders of the majority community, with whom, after a period of political meandering since the 1915 riots, the Muslims of this land, without seeking a separate political expression, joined the major national political party in their demand for full independence of our island home.

If the Muslims since the beginning of this century became consciously aware of their identity, as a distinct entity in the polity of Ceylon, and made this position palpably clear in the second State Council by dislodging themselves from the political affiliation with the Tamil community, the beginnings of such awareness of a 'collective identity' could be traced to the second half of the 19th century with the Muslims' incipient ventures in journalism, educational experiment and I.L.M. Abdul Azeez's defiant encounter with Ponnambalam Ramanathan's contention that the Moors of

* Crippled Minds, By Susantha Goonatilake. ch. V. pp. 144–145. Col. 1982.

Ceylon were of Tamil-speaking Dravidian origin,* hence a separate representation for them in the Legislature had no rationale. Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan had established himself as an eloquent, perspicuous and matchless tribune in the Legislative Council. His position after the riots of 1915 was at its apogee consequent to his forceful indictment of the martial law authorities. And he was acclaimed a national hero. Hence, from this state of hubris, his thesis on the Moorish origin published towards the end of the 19th century seemed to carry credence. The Ramanathan thesis on the ethnicity of the Moors, it was learned was not the consequence of a dispassionate investigation into the Moorish origin, but a tendentiously motivated assertion to prevent the Moors seeking separate representation in the Legislative Council.

It was actually in the course of this ethnic controversy of the Moors, that the Arab origin of the Ceylon Moors came to be reiterated and a clear demarcation drawn between the Moors of Indian origin, who subsequently came to be designated "Coast Moors", as against the island's Moors as Ceylon Moors, of Arab extraction. Polemics motivated these early investigations into Moorish origin. Early publications on this subject were the works of controversy rather than of scholarship, nevertheless, they engendered a Moorish penchant for investigating their genesis and identity. And on this road to seek their own identity, Dr. Samaraweera recounts sequentially various attempts of the Muslims, such as their enthusiastic response to the presence of Arabi Pasha and the Khilafat movement and the collections of funds to complete the Hejaz railway (Damascus-Medina), and the inauguration of the Red Crescent Fund etc. All these endeavours were meant to renew the long lost Arab connections. These nostalgic efforts to rejuvenate the muffled and lingering memories of their origin became a part of Muslim effort to revive Arab connections.

To accentuate the identification of the Ceylon Moors with the Arabs, there was an attempt to eliminate South Indian practices that had crept in through the Coast Moors. And in Dr. Samaraweera's paper the reader would glean the practices believed to be of Coast Moor (Indian) origin, which the Ceylon Moors attempted to expunge. Efforts during this period to reform Muslim marriage and divorce proceedings are all related Muslim attempts at establishing their identity as apart from other major communities of the island. All these efforts eventually materialized in the enactment of the Mohammedan Marriage Registration Ordinance of 1886,

* The Ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon. JRAS (C.B.) 1888. pp. 234–262. By P. Ramanathan.

and the legitimizing of Muslim divorce outside of the code of law through courts following a supreme court decision in 1871. Thus the blurred and foggy demarcation between the Muslims and other communities of this country came to be cleared and their distinct identity as a segment of the Sri Lankan nation was getting delineated in bolder relief.

* * *

Dr. Wimalaratne examines the political history of this country during the entirety of the British period (1796 – 1948), with special reference to the Moors of Ceylon. He isolates the larger segment of the Muslim community, namely the Moors for his examination during the British regime. A portrayal of this community from early British times is subject to close observation especially since the arrival of Colebrooke Commissioners, with the implementation of their legislations, especially with reference to the abolition of Rajakariya and state monopoly in trade. He further examines the impact of the Donoughmore Reforms of 1931 on the Moors leading to the dawn of Independence under dominion status in February 1948. It contains an elaborate though not an analytic reference to Muslim revivalism of the late 19th century and the riots of 1915.

Running through this paper is the theme, that the Muslims, mainly the Moors were the beneficiaries under the British; and many instances of legislative enactments and official appointments are cited in favour of this contention. The Moors benefited no doubt from these measures, but it should be borne in mind, that with a few exceptions the benefits accrued by some of these legislations were unanticipated by-products. In any case these legislations were unable to resuscitate the economic life of the Moors after nearly 300 years of Portuguese and Dutch suppression and repression. And we know not, to what extent the British were motivated by the imperial policy of 'divide and rule' in conferring certain benefices on the Moors which estranged them from the Sinhala community of this land, with whom the Moors had an accord, understanding and social arrangement which was unique in inter-communal tolerance and harmony. In retrospect, the entire British attitude to the riots of 1915 is very clear today. Whatever the causes of the riots might have been , it is an acknowledged fact that the Britishers precipitated it by their deliberate indifference in the initial stages, when the Moorish community became the victim of arson, loot and massacre. And in the course of it the authorities read 'treason, conspiracy and sedition' directed against British rule by the Sinhala Buddhists; Martial Law ensued and now the Sinhalese, especially the Buddhists became the victims of British terror.*

* Armond de Souza op.cit.

What is significant in this paper is that the inauguration of British rule in 1796 did not **ipso facto** imply a relief from all the iniquitous, unjust and inhuman state of affairs to which the Moors had been subjected to from 1505 to 1796. Besides the continuation of this state of affairs by sheer force of social inertia, made the Moors the most backward educationally, hence by consequence economically, socially and politically. Dr. Wimalaratne, points to two instances which made certain sections of the Moors continue to languish under the system of compulsory labour (Rajakariya) till 1865. "It was brought to the notice of Colebrooke that in Galle, the Moor men were pressed by the headmen and worked without pay or even the subsistence allowed to criminal prisoners and that they were subject to corporal punishment and reduced to poverty and distress by being taken away from their occupations." This shows, that at least a certain section of the Moor community continued to undergo this cruelty until the abolition of Rajakariya on the recommendations of Colebrooke in 1834. Despite its abolition, an exception was made with regard to temple and devale lands. where Rajakariya continued to operate. And when the Temple Land Commissioners visited the temple and devale lands between 1857 – 1865, the Moors who experienced the ill-effect and the nagging burden of the services attached to these lands, were reported to have implored the commissioners to relieve them from temple and devale lands services and had expressed their wish to hold lands directly under the state.

When we come almost to the close of the 19th century, though unrelated, the phenomenon churning the Muslim community was suggestive of revivalism very much analogous to the Buddhist and Hindu revivalism that was taking place in this country. And in retrospect, scholars scanning the social events of this period were looking out for evidence of a Muslim revivalism. There was undoubtedly a great upsurge among a few enlightened and benign individuals in Kandy and Colombo to bring about a change in the Muslim frame of reference to secular English education and also to initiate those changes. Against all odds from the conservative section of the community there was a great agitation for educational reform spearheaded by M. C. Siddi Lebbe and aided by A. M. Wapichi Marikkar. This reformist trend fortunately for the community was activated by the timely arrival of Arabi Pasha in 1883. But to confuse an agitation for reform, however great, to a revivalism is really misleading. Christian proselytization and their cultural influence through their schools even during British times, continued to dissarray the religious and cultural life

* Report of Temple Land Commission. 1863. S.P. IX of 1864. p. 3.

of the Buddhists and Hindus. Hence, there was a justification for revivalism among them. In fact, it was much more than a revivalism – under such distinguished leaders as Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala, Anagarika Dharmapala, Henry Steele Olcott and Arumuga Navalar – it turned out to be a great awakening and a renaissance among the two major communities of the island. As stated elsewhere, and confirmed by non-Muslim sources, proselytization among the Moors and Malays was a decided failure. The Muslims were able to retain their faith and their cultural life at the expense of mundane advantages. Hence to recover them, the Muslims had to rethink their attitude to secular English education. If at all this enlightened Muslim aspiration may be called revivalism, it was mainly confined to the realm of education and no more – to be precise to secular English education. Because it was abundantly clear that without it, social, economic and political advantages would be lost. Despite their neglect of secular education under the Portuguese, the Dutch and early British times, for obvious reason of preserving their faith, the Muslims had not throughout the colonial period neglected the religious education of the community. It was discovered that towards the end of the 19th century, that the Moors were looking after the religious needs of their younger generation through nearly 5,910 verandah schools* (madrasas) imparting knowledge of the Quran and elementary Arabic. Thus neither Islam nor its culture had atrophied to call for a revival. Their ethico-religious life remained unimpaired at the expense of mundane advantages. Muslims remained cohesive as a community and in turn were well integrated with the Sinhala and Tamil communities. But they continued to remain impervious to ideological assimilation which ensured their distinct identity. It may be interesting to note the figures cited in Appendix III of Dr. Wimalaratne's paper for the period 1936–45 relating to inter-marriage.** While intermarriage for every community including Europeans are recorded for this period in significant numbers, for Muslims it is recorded as NIL. Whatever the advantages may be eugenically and from the perspective of communal harmony, we are unaware, but our perception is that, the avoidance if not minimising of intermarriages with other communities is just another contrivance by which the Moors preserved their identity both ethnic and religious. So to describe all the endeavours of Siddi Lebbe, Wapichi Marikkar and Arabi Pasha in the direction of educational reform of the Muslims as revivalism would be incorrect. Muslim predicament at this stage was to bring about a blend of secular English education with Islamic education, i.e. Arabic and

* The Administration Report of Education Dept. for 1893
** From the Ceylon Ferguson Directory. 1949. p. 201.

Quranic education. These leaders had a tremendous problem of allaying the fears of Muslim conservatives, as it was not altogether unfounded since a large number of Buddhists and Hindus in the course of acquiring secular education for worldly advantages renounced their respective faiths in favour of Christianity. In the face of this acknowledged fact, the problem that beset the Muslim educational reformers was, in a way far more arduous than that of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of India. Nevertheless, they did inch their way through myriad ways of speech making, journalism, pamphleteering and formation of educational societies, which eventually led to the establishment of the first 'Anglo-Mohammedan' school which became the precursor of Zahira College. All these aspects of the Muslim educational movement are recounted by Dr. Wimalaratne in graphic detail.

At the commencement of this century, Siddi Lebbe, I. L. M. Abdul Azeez, M. C. Mohamed and others pioneered the formation of the Moors' Union, which was followed in 1903 by the establishment of the Ceylon Muslim League. Moors Union of 1900 presaged the founding of the Ceylon Moors Association by a younger generation of men led by A. R. A. Razik (Sir Razik Fareed) and others. Since then, the Moors Association and the Muslim League rapidly grew in strength and developed their respective ancillary organisation. These two organisations which should have complemented each other dissipated a good quantum of their energy in sectarian squabbles especially in their later phase. The Muslim League (like the Moors organisation) was non-political and represented all segments of the Muslim community. Despite the presence of other segments of the Muslims in the Muslim League, a large number of its members continued to be Moors. Subsequently, organisations such as All Ceylon Malay Association, the Memon and Bohra Associations too had been formed to respond to their cultural needs. And such secondary non-political organisations, far from being antithetical were complementary to the enrichment of the Muslim Ummah as a whole. And these lateral Muslim organisations, typically symbolise in miniature, the unity in diversity of the world Muslim Ummah. It was in this context that the Ceylon Moors, the largest component of the Muslim community in this country, which had zoomed from 31,618 in 1814 to 1,056,972 by the 1981 Census, constituting 93.16 per cent of the Muslims of this country looked forward to the All Ceylon Moors Association and its allied organisations. Quite irrespective of the fact that these ethno-cultural groups cohere in one Ummah under the ethico-religious invariant of Islam, yet it is through their respective secondary social organisations that they hope to satiate their particular cultural and social needs. But regrettably this cultural centrifugalism at a secondary level determined by sociological considera-

tions, and All Ceylon Muslim League's attempts to represent all Muslims at an ideological and primary cultural level had been misconstrued as counterposing itself to the Moors Association. And Dr. Wimalaratne points to instances where this misconception led to collision between the Moors Association and the Muslim League.

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Dr. K. M. de Silva in his two brief papers, brings out certain salient features of the Muslims of this country – their weakness and virtues as a community.

Their weakness is their magnitude (7.4 per cent of the total population 1981 Census) compared to the other communities; then they are sparsely spread out over the whole country, so that unlike the Tamils, the Muslims are not concentrated to constitute a majority at least in any one of the country's 23 districts. Then the most important point Dr. Silva drives home is that the ethnicity of the Muslims is identified in terms of religion and culture and not language – this too has set them apart. "Unlike the Tamils they have no great emotional commitment to language, and they have demonstrated little reluctance to adopt Sinhalese as the language in which their children shall be educated." The actual fact is that Muslims have no commitment to any particular language. Their preference for a particular language has been motivated by pragmatic considerations. Their undeviating commitment is to religion, and consequently their familiarity with Arabic. Today, a large majority of the Muslim children in the Sinhala dominated districts are receiving their education in the Sinhala medium, as those in the Tamil districts receive their education in the Tamil medium. One of the vital issues that convulsed the general elections of 1956 in this country was language. Since then the language issue has continued to remain the most critical to every government that followed. And this issue, has brought about a deepening cleavage between the two major communities of this country. Relationship between these two communities became acrimonious since 1956, and now it has begun to take violent forms. But the Muslims remain emotionally uninfluenced by this issue.

Unlike the Tamils the Muslims being dispersed over the whole island may have its political disadvantage as Dr. Silva points out, especially when it comes to representation in the Legislature of this country; besides they could not enjoy the privilege of a "traditional homeland" anywhere in this country. The dispersal of the Muslims is not the result of a deliberate choice on the part of the community, but the result, of broadly two main

factors. Their trading practices demanded that they move out to every village and hamlet to dispose of their merchandise and in turn to collect the local produce for export. Secondly, Portuguese and Dutch atrocities and persecutions made most of these Muslims shift their homes away from the western sea-board. Long-term results of this dispersal was the great understanding that developed between the Sinhalese and the Muslims resulting from mutually useful and co-operative life among them. This healthy accord was later to give the Muslims representation in the predominantly Sinhala areas. Muslims are not predominant in any single of the 23 districts in the 9 provinces. Election results since the 1947 parliamentary general elections confirm these facts. The Sinhalese apparently didn't mind reposing their faith in the Muslims to represent their interests in the legislature. This proved to be a remarkable turn of events, especially when the pleading of the Muslims for greater representation in the legislature went unheeded.* Political prudence or sheer limiting circumstances constrain the Muslims not to form a political party of their own. But the Muslims' fidelity to their religion and to render meaningful such fidelity by the unhindered pursuits of their economic interests influenced them to seek membership in the major national political parties of the island rather than forming one of their own as the Tamils did. This policy was to pay great dividends in the successive general elections in this country since 1947. Muslims were returned to parliament from predominantly Sinhala constituencies against Sinhala candidates.** A Muslim was even returned uncontested from a Sinhala-dominated constituency, namely Puttalam.*** In most of these constituencies Muslims do not constitute a significant minority, much less a majority.In contrast no Tamil could get himself elected by a predominant Sinhala constituency. Quite appropriately Dr. Silva observed that the Muslims 'are regarded as being so clearly integrated into the Sri Lankan polity

* Mr. A. R. A. Razik (Sir Razik Fareed) pleaded for the provision of 12 seats for the Moors in the national legislature. Vide — Hansard (State Council) 1945. Vol. ii.

** These constituencies were :—

	Muslim Vote
Kadugannawa . . . . . .1952 & 1956	10.2% . . . 1947
Galagedera 1960	4% of the total . .1960.
Puttalam . . . . . .1947 to date.	40% — 1946; 41% 1959; 38% — 1976.
Akurana—Harispattuwa . .1947 to date.	17.4% — 1947; 19% — 1976.
Borella 1977	Less than 5%.
Balangoda 1977	2.75%
Beruwela	21% — 1959; 26% — 1976.

*** A Statistical Survey of the Elections to the Legislatures of Sri Lanka, 1911—1977. — De Silva, G.P.S.H. — Dehiwela, Sri Lanka, 1979.

that the Sinhalese vote for them on party grounds against Sinhala opponents.'

Cultural differences of various communities in this country is no reason to be divisive politically to the detriment of the nation as a whole. At least the Muslims by their astute political behaviour have indicated the possibility of political inter-communal unity while retaining one's cultural independence and identity. Muslim thinking has been for political and economic integration with every other community while preserving cultural identity. No minority in any country could hope to achieve anything for its members by a hostile confrontation with the majority community. It is with the goodwill, co-operation and understanding of the majority could the minorities hope to lead a life of economic stability and cultural efflorescence.

Cultural awakening of the Muslims in contrast to the Sinhalese and Tamils had been very slow. It is strange that only the arrival in this country of the Egyptian exile roused the Muslims from their indolence. The achilles heel of the Muslims had been education. And under the influence of Siddi Lebbe, Wapichi Marikkar and Arabi Pasha secular educational progress of the Muslims commenced. But the slow pace and the apathy of the community to secular education continued to make the community lag behind others in the field of education. It is since 1956, especially since 1960, that deliberate steps were taken, distinct changes brought about and remarkable results achieved by the Muslims in the realm of education. Despite all the efforts of the Muslims these advantages could not have been won without the goodwill of the major community. Manifestly, the distinct advantages won by the Muslims, in this field, we agree, with Dr. Silva was a consequence of Sinhala altruism.

Goodwill and understanding among the communities of a country is a consequence of many forces at work over a long period of time, almost imperceptibly at all levels of life, which eventually by inter-communal integration brings about national unity among them. But this unity painfully built up over centuries may be rent asunder overnight as in a chemical reaction by catalytic agents. And once the old established unity is scattered, it would be a herculian task to restore the equilibrium. Research findings brought up before this seminar reveal that the Muslims of this country throughout their long period have had an understanding with the Sinhalese, despite the varying vicissitudes of the country's history during the period of western rule (1505 – 1947). Of course, one would point to the riots of 1915. The riots of 1915 was an unfortunate event in the Sinhala-Muslim relationship. "The Ceylon Muslims live at peace with

their countrymen and belong to the permanent population."* Provocation for the riots were provided by a large number of petty traders who coming from the southern coast of India were aggressive in their activities as they had no abiding interest in this land. And their provocative behaviour was used by the British imperialists to drive a wedge between the Sinhalese and the Muslims. And the unfortunate victims turned out to be Ceylon Moors and the Sinhalese. In retrospect, the riots appear a flash in the pan with no grave basis in reality. The Coasts Moors or 'Hambayas' have almost disappeared through emigration or assimilation. But the Ceylon Moors continued to exist in a state of camaraderie with the Sinhalese as they had for centuries in the past. Nevertheless, this untoward incident made the Muslims wary of the Sinhalese for nearly 25 years.

In the context of limited resources and opportunities competition to gain possession of employment in the state sector is an undeniable fact. And in this competition Muslims as a minority had to contend with, primarily the minorities, especially the Tamils, as, in the past, the language of the Moors was Tamil. By their backwardness in education they were ill-equipped for this competition. And the gains made by the Muslims in education since 1956, is conjectured as Sinhala politicians' contrivance to utilize the Muslims to counterwield the Tamil community 'in a game of checks and balances.' If that is so, it would remain largely a matter of feeling, and as a subjective phenomenon it would be incapable of any objective analysis. Further, such a surmise is likely to deny the assiduous efforts taken by the Muslim reformers, educationists and legislators in pressing their demands and the benign response of the Sinhala-dominated governments, which deigned to extend concessionary advantages to raise the educational levels of a backward community.

As a minority, Muslims realized very early the advantages to the country as a whole in economic integration and cultural autonomy. In a small territorial unit like Sri Lanka, with only two main languages and just a quarter dozen distinct communities, a call for a separation or federalism was, in the speculation of the Muslims, a demand which is as irrational as it is irresponsible. Hence, Muslims were apprehensive of even regional concessions to be extended by the central government in any form, as they felt, that such concessions would presage divisive tendencies. Hence, Sir Razik Fareed, the foremost Moorish leader of this country, expressed his vehement opposition when between 1966 – 1968, the then government attempted to introduce the District Council Scheme. In this connection it may be interesting to record that all the Muslim members of the Presiden-

* op. cit. Armond De Souza. Col. 1916.

tial Commission in the District Development Council, expressed their dissent against the main recommendations of that Commission.*

Dr. K. M. de Silva in a second paper, 'Muslim Leaders and the Nationalist Movement,' presented at this seminar, brings out certain features in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which distinguishes it from the kindred movements among the Buddhists and the Hindus and the fluctuating attitudes of the Muslims towards the Sinhalese and the Tamils and the eventual resolution of the Muslims organized under the Muslim League and the Moors' Association. These twin organizations reiterated the national identity of the Muslims and reaffirmed the community's realignment with the majority community of this country in its struggle for independence. Muslims suddenly discovered how backward they were in education. Hence their revivalism in this country is, mainly linked with the desire to revitalize their education. Muslims had kept away from the Christianized education of the Westerners in order to preserve their faith. Educational lag hindered their socio-economic advancement. Muslims had paid a great price to preserve their faith. Hence Muslim revivalism begins with education as they did not succumb to the sedulous attraction of Christian propaganda.

A noteworthy factor which activated Muslim revivalism was the arrival in the island of Arabi Pasha in 1883. Under his inspiration Siddi Lebbe and Wapichi Marikkar reappraised Muslim attitude to secular education and began the educational progress which continued to develop right through the following century. Muslim revivalism, did not, due to obvious reasons develop to the stage of militant nationalism. Hence, Dr. Silva quite rightly observes, that Muslim revivalism is remarkable because of the absence of 'political overtones,' unlike the Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism. Though the Muslims experienced the harsh and cruel rule of the Portuguese and the Dutch, the Sinhala Buddhists, as the major community of this country bore the brunt of European misrule up to and including British rule. Hence it was natural for the Sinhala Nationalist Movement to reflect its anti-British and anti-Christian feelings in their revivalist activities.

The 1915 riots as alluded to earlier was a regrettable occurrence, which was neither caused by the Ceylon Moors nor hailed by the Sinhalese. If Muslims were the victims of the riots the Sinhalese were the victims of savage martial law authorities. Sinhala-Muslim relations had been unstained

* Sessional Paper v. of 1980. Report of Presidential Commission on Development Councils. pp. 83–102.

before 1915 and continues unimpaired despite the event of 1915. Unlike the Ceylon Moors, the Coast Moors of Indian origin had no abiding interest in this land of ours. They had only an economic interest in this country. They showed scant interest to the age old traditions and customs of the land, especially of the Sinhala Buddhists. And their exploitive methods could not but incur the displeasure if not the wrath of the people. But what is to be regretted is, that once the riots commenced consequent to the provocation of the Coast Moors, all demarcations between the Coast Moors and the Ceylon Moors were lost. The British pursuing a policy of divide and rule capitalised in the situation. Punjabi soldiers were let loose on the innocent Sinhalese even in the remotest villages,* and extended undue favours to the Moors which provoked the unruly elements among the Sinhalese against the Muslims. Thus for the first time Sinhala-Muslim relationship was violently disturbed to the remorse of both communities. Hence, the Muslims since 1915 as Dr. Silva points out, were circumspect about the Sinhala Buddhists and they preferred to drift along with the other minority community – the Tamils. The political thinking of the Moors during this period began to suffer from 'snow blindness' caused by the gruesome and excruciating experiences of 1915. The community unfortunately, lacked for some time, perspicuous and perceptive minds to break through this myopic political thinking, hence they acquiesced in the political leadership of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, and soon after, the Muslims were even baited for a while by the 50 – 50 demand of Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam. It was left to a new generation of Muslim leaders primarily Sir Razik Fareed and Mr. T. B. Jayah of the Ceylon Moors' Association and the Ceylon Muslim League respectively, in the Second State Council, on the eve of this country's independence, to establish clearly and firmly a Ceylon Moorish, and a still larger, Ceylon Muslim identity to re-establish Sinhala Muslim solidarity which had been smothered during the dark days of 1915, and which had been judiciously utilized by the British rulers and ingenious politicians to wean away the Muslims of this country and isolate them from the mainstream of the national struggle of the majority community. All these changing trends of Muslim attitude to constitutional reforms leading to the country's independence with the Soulbury Constitution are dealt with sequentially by Dr. Silva.

". . . . . .the Muslims in general, were well behind the Tamils and the Sinhalese in the formulation of political demands and in the pressure for

* 57/77 G.A.'s Diaries. Uva. May 15, 1915. – SLNA. – Refers to many incidents of terror perpetrated by the Punjabi soldiers on the Sinhala peasants even in remote villages of Uva.

constitutional reforms. . . . .". This state of affairs of the Muslims, pinpointed by Dr. Silva, calls more for an explanation than a mere statement of facts. Because of the measures adopted for the sake of preservation of their faith and cultural identity, the Muslims of Ceylon experienced social disabilities and economic hardships at the hands of the Portuguese and the Dutch. Muslims eschewed secular education under western rule, as that was the channel through which conversion began. Consequently during British times the Muslims were found to be the most backward of all communities of this country, at least in the matter of secular education. Secular education has become **sine qua non** for economic advancement, social prestige and cultural influence. Hence, under the British, the problem that confronted the Muslims was not so much communal regeneration as its preservation. Resuscitation and rejuvenation of their educational and cultural life was to be the beginning of their nationalism along with other communities of this land. Obviously, it had to be a silent, though a formidable endeavour and begins with the educational activities toward the end of the 19th century. Thus there was neither the possibility nor the necessity for Muslim revivalism to be volatile in its demands as to develop 'political overtones'.

* * *

The late Mr. A. M. A. Azeez, believed that Muslim contribution to Sri Lankan heritage and history cannot be adequately appreciated as the history of the Muslims of Sri Lanka is one "incompletely explored field". Until 1974 January, when the seminar of the Muslims of Sri Lanka and of South and South East Asia was held, we ourselves did not realize the magnitude of the problem concerning the origin and history of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. As participants at the seminar represented many disciplines, each discipline helped to free the other from prejudice or over-accentuation of one by the other. The seminar also disclosed that the theme, 'Sri Lankan Muslims,' cannot be investigated in absolute independence of the history of the commercial and trading activities of the region to which Sri Lanka belongs. Further, it also revealed that the ethnic origin of the Moors goes back to pre-Islamic days. And since the emergence of Islam, these descendants of the Arabs in Sri Lanka have had uninterrupted contact with their progenitors — the Arabs, until the 13th century, and these connections since then save for occasional visits by Arab or Persian divines, mystics and missionaries was mainly cultural. And finally, the seminar though it aimed at producing a comprehensive history of the Muslims of this country as envisaged by some scholars found the complete absence of records of these people which might have been maintained in Arabic, Persian, Arabic-Tamil and Tamil which were the

commercial and literary languages* of the Muslims of this region at various times as is clear from literary references and lithic records.** Galle trilingual slab inscription set up by the Chinese ship captain Cheng Ho in 1410 is inscribed in Persian, Tamil and Chinese. Persian was the official language of Muslim India, and with the conversion of Gujerat and Bengal, Muslim influence along the Malabar and the Coromandal coasts was strengthened and Muslim trade became dominant in the region including Sri Lanka. These Persian-speaking Muslims who founded a chain of settlements all over this region had no connection with Iran, but with Muslim India. In this connection it is interesting to note that Persian which was introduced in 1410 as an official language of Arakan, continued in that position until its British take-over in the 19th century.***

Future investigators in this field, we hope, would shed much light on the ethno-cultural peculiarities of the varied segments of the Sri Lankan Muslims. What makes the Muslim Ummah colourful at an international and national level is her ethno-cultural diversity and the unifying element of religion. Cultural enrichment of the Ummah owes its origin to the interaction among its diverse ethno-cultural groups.

The people of Sri Lanka constitute one of the fascinating scenarios, especially for a small country such as ours. Despite interaction which has resulted in inter-communal integration, the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers etc. as communities remain culturally autonomous with lives of their own. Being naturalized in the island over a considerable time span, these communities have politically compromised and economically adjusted themselves to constitute the larger society of the Sri Lankan nation, and not mere replicas of overseas branches of some other countries, because they have ceased to look for leadership to their country's origin. In highly advanced industrialized countries life is urbanized and dynamic social mobility leads to much social mixture when people find it difficult to identify themselves. It is highly unlikely, that Afro-Asian countries such as ours would reach this stage of ethnic uncertainty.

Diverse origins of people who make up the Sri Lankan nation do not form a mosaic, because their cultural contours are for ever fluctuating; nor do they constitute a melting pot as in countries like the United States,

* Ariya Cakravarti spoke fluent Persian. Vide ibn Batuta. Travels.

** Md. Sameer "Archaeological evidence of Early Arabs in Ceylon." MICH. A Souvenir 1965. Also vide Tomb Inscriptions of Mannar, Trincomalee and Colombo.

*** Hussain Haqani, Vide his Paper (page 4) presented at the seminar, but not included in this Vol.

because despite cultural interaction and integration there has been no complete assimilation of one by the other. Continuity of the Sinhala and Muslim communities in this country as distinct and discrete ethico-religious and ethno-cultural entities for nearly a millenia and a half is manifest evidence of this notion. No ethnic group is wholly unique and yet no two are completely alike. Regardless of the many ethno-cultural variables which accounts for the diversity of the Sri Lankans at a national level, this nation also reveals a unity – a unity of outlook, which distinguishes them from other nations of the world. Mixture of unity and diversity runs through Sri Lankan history.

Sri Lankan road to pluralism has not been altogether smooth sailing. The Mahavamsa records of Sinhala Dravidian conflicts in this country from pre-Christian times. There had been acrimonious religious debates between Buddhists and Christians during the 19th century culminating in the famous Panadura controversy in 1873. These events in some instances led to regional disturbances. And finally there was the recrudescence of 1915 violence which made the Sinhalese and Muslims languish at the hands of martial law authorities and the communal elements. Sri Lankan pluralism is not an ideal with which we started, but an accommodation to which we were eventually driven by the realization of mutual advantage. The rich economic opportunities of the country also provided alternate outlets for the energies of the communities of Sri Lanka.

Many ethnic groups that make up the Sri Lankan polity did not arrive at the same time or locate in the same place. Each group typically had its own era, during which its immigration to Ceylon was concentrated. Each group has its own geographic distribution pattern. There are many historic reasons for this and for their arrival at one period of history rather than another.

Because economic conditions in the country as a whole is different, not only in different areas but in different eras, the Muslim community faced a different set of opportunities, challenges, stimuli and constraints at different times. Hence the fate of the Muslims became intertwined with the fate of the economic activities of time and place, such as, trade, paddy cultivation, pearl fishing, gemming and so on. Muslims as the seminar papers show, engaged themselves in diverse activities at different times compelled by circumstances which were not their creation. Sometimes the difference within the Muslim community are greater than the differences between itself and the other ethnic groups and the larger society in which

it finds itself. The economic history of the Muslims reflected the influence of time and place as well as the cultural heritage and the skills brought to this island by its pioneering members. And in the interaction with other communities the Muslims had to make compromises and adjustments. Each group changed in Ceylon and the Sri Lankan society changed in many ways. This integrating transformation has not been a uniflow as such. Much of the words, food habits, dress and art forms and other cultural traits of the Sri Lankan society today were ethnic peculiarities, but are now part of the common heritage. Groups have not remained immobile and inanimate as in a mosaic nor altogether vanished as in a melting pot, but neither the communities nor the country are the same as they were.

While economic development and progress had been pervasive, especially since the arrival of the Europeans, particularly from 1815, there are wide variations in the rates of progress among ethnic groups. Life of every community in this country had been violently disturbed during the colonial era in many ways. Everyone of the communities encountered hardships of some sort or other. Persecution of the Muslims was ruthless, especially under the Portuguese and the Dutch because of two reasons of religion and trade. To the Christian colonialists from the west, especially to the Portuguese and the Dutch, Moorish persecution was a revival and an extension of the crusading spirit. And the Muslims were unable to fight back, much less, to defend themselves, because they had neither a kingdom of their own nor a zone or sphere of influence where they were concentrated. Sinhala Buddhists had a kingdom of their own and the Tamils were concentrated in theirs.

From Vijayan times this land had attracted immigrants, invaders and traders. Most of them made this island their permanent habitat and eventually formed the pluralist society that it is. Among those who came with the exclusive intention of economic motivation, Ceylonization in language, citizenship and culture had a low priority. Such were the Indian Coast Moors, Kerala traders, workers and teachers; Afghans money lenders and the British planters, who naturally began to leave this country since the dawn of independence in 1948. The principal communities, the Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors, Malays and the Burghers integrated to form the Sri Lankan nation. And those groups which were too negligible to form cohesive communities were assimilated by the major communities.

Causes of the backwardness of the Muslims vis-a-vis other communities should be sought not in a racial or genetic explanation. It is mainly the

consequence of their deficiency in secular education, and these aspects of the community are brought out in the seminar papers in illuminating detail. Why groups differ as much as they do is a complex question to which history gives some clues.

Sum total of human activities composed of values, attitudes, skills and talents which the sociologists call culture the economists call 'human capital.' Though the material culture of the Germanic people was almost completely annihilated during the 1939 – 45 war, their recovery was indeed miraculous. The war destroyed the tangible physical capital of the nation – its urban centres, buildings, machinery, farmlands, highways, bridges and dams. What it did not destroy was the 'human capital' of the Germans which built all these things. In any case physical and material elements of an economy waste away and will have to be replaced. This dissipation is unavoidable. Situations such as war only accelerates this process. But continued progress depends on what people know and will do.

The significance of human capital in an ethnic context is seen in many ways. What the Portuguese and the Dutch achieved with their decrees, laws and harsh policies was the deprivation of the physical capital of the Moors – the accumulation of their material wealth. But what they could not destroy was their human capital, which under different circumstances enabled them to diversify their ways of earning their livelihood. This is one instance where we find that cultural inheritance has proved more important than biological inheritance. This enabled the Muslims to outlive the Portuguese and the Dutch.

The seminar began a process at a concerted effort to investigate the origin and history of the Muslims of Sri Lanka and of South and South East Asia. Therefore, its purposive sense of direction and objectives were clear. A society or a nation may be large or small, but its beauty and richness lies in its diversity – ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural and not in a dead ethnic uniformity or cultural homogeneity. This is best achieved by spontaneous integration and not by compelling legislative measures leading to assimilation or by aggressive absorption of one community by another. And this we believe, is best achieved, when each community is aware of its origin and history. Moors and Malays who compose the bulk of the Muslim community of this country, have begun to record their heritage and we hope, that similar efforts would be made to record the history of other segments of this community. Ethno-religious and linguistic factors are the primary lineaments that bind a people and impart to them

a common outlook and a way of life, thus distinguishing them from the others. And history reveals that to smother such factors, which impart a sense of identity to the individuals and to the community is neither possible nor disirable. And this volume of papers comes out at a time, when, especially among the Afro-Asian nations there is a cultural resurgence and an assertion of national identities. This assertion should not in any way becloud the vision of each community in a country finding its precise place in the larger scheme of national polity – where there is neither chauvinistic dominance by the majority nor impudent defiance by the minorities. Only under such conditions could we hope to see a bounteous Lanka – politically united, economically integrated and culturally autonomous.

Dr. M. A. M. Shukri, B.A. (Hons.) Ph.D.(Edin.)

Friday, 7th February, 1986.
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The arrangement of the Seminar Papers in this volume, is neither arbitrary nor based on alphabetical order of the authors names as one would expect it to be. To ensure the readers of this volume, a captivating portrayal of the story of the Muslims of this country, against the wider regional perspectives, we have, arranged them in such a way, as to retain an organic unity of the theme, 'Muslims of Sri Lanka', to synchronize with a chronological sequence as they unfold their origin and history.

As economic and social history constitutes the core of society, we deign to make those papers relating to those aspects, precede, and those relating to cultural and political history, as belonging to the 'ideological superstructure' to follow. Accordingly, we begin with the thesis of Prof. Sirima Kiribamune and conclude with the two papers of Prof. K. M. de Silva. The latter's two papers deal with political history coming down to recent times. These twin papers of Prof. de Silva, though brief, are illuminating, hence they appropriately constitute a grand finale to this volume. Hemmed in between the papers of these two are sixteen original research papers which approach the same subject from different angles, perspectives and orientation.

MUSLIMS AND THE TRADE OF THE ARABIAN SEA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRI LANKA FROM THE BIRTH OF ISLAM TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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The study of Muslim trade in the Arabian Sea between the birth of Islam and the fifteenth Century A. D. is in fact the study of the maritime commercial activities of many different groups of people engulfed in the ever widening frontiers of Islam. Despite the frequent use of the 'Arab trade' with reference to Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean, at no time was it purely Arab either in terms of shipping or of traders. Very soon after the birth of Islam in Arabia, this religion was embraced by the Persians, who along with the Arabs can be considered the earliest Muslim traders in the Indian Ocean. Subsequently East African and Indian traders, and towards the end of the period under survey, even some Indonesians came under the umbrella of Islamic trade. A point which must be noted about all these people is that none of them, Arab or otherwise, were new to the trade of the Indian Ocean at the time of the birth of Islam. However, with the spread of Islam among them, the 'Muslim trader' gained a new identity, and a fresh dynamism entered East-West relations.

The earliest phase of Muslim trade began under the leadership of the Arab empire. The participation of the Arabs in oceanic trade from the earliest of times was perhaps inevitable. Considering the fact that the sea-farers of the ancient world hugged the coasts, the Arabian sea-board could hardly be avoided in any East-West maritime activity. This geographical situation was used to advantage by the merchants of southern Arabia. The ports of this region were not only transit points but also ports of supply, specially in view of the fact that the Hadramawt was the only place from which frankincense, a much sought after commodity, could be obtained. Flanked by the Red Sea and the

Persian Gulf, the two main sea-ways from East to West Asia prior to discovery of the Cape route, the Arabs were strategically located for their historic role as intermediaries between the East and West.

The maritime trade of the Indian Ocean can be traced back to the dawn of civilization when as early as the third millenium B. C. the Harappan merchants of India traded with Mesopotamia through the ports of the Persian Gulf.[1] Around the same time or even earlier, Egypt of the Pharaohs established commercial links with the South Arabian and Red Sea coasts.[2] Acting as middlemen on these oceanic routes were, among others, the inhabitants of Arabia. In the period which followed the Phoenicians dominated the sea-routes but the Sabaean merchants of the Yemen also played a limited role in the trade with the Orient.[3]

The establishment of the Achaemenid empire of the Persians in the sixth century B. C. brought the whole of West Asia and Egypt under its control. Attempts at utilising maritime routes for trade purposes during this time involved the active participation of the experienced Arab seafarers,[4] a situation which developed further with the maritime explorations of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B. C. With reference to the post-Alexandrian period we have the testimony of Agatharkhides in the second century B. C. who states that the Sabaeans and the people of Gerrha on the Persian Gulf acted as the chief intermediaries in the sea trade between the East and West.[5] The arrival of Indian ships at Sabaean ports also finds mention in this work.

A new impetus to the trade of the Indian Ocean was given by the establishment of the Roman empire. Although the use of the monsoon winds enabled direct sailings from the Red Sea to the Indian coast, the Arabian ports could not be completely disregarded. Contemporary accounts speak of the presence of Arab ship captains and trading agents at their own ports as well as the arrival of these ships at the Indian port of Barygaza (Bhāru-kaccha, modern Broach) and the East African coast.[6] Arab ships sailed to the Malabar coast in South India and Sri Lanka during this time.[7] It is sometimes thought that it was perhaps the presence of Arab traders in the island which gave rise to the **Mahāvamsa** story that King Pandukābhaya set aside a special area in Anuradhapura for the Yonas.[8] Some would like to identify them as Greeks.

The decline of Rome towards the end of the second century A. D. and the establishment of the Byzantian Empire with its capital at Constantinople in 323 A. D., brought about far-reaching changes in East-West trade. The close links established between Sri Lanka and the early Roman empire were further strengthened. An embassy from **Serendivi** is said to have been received by the Emperor Julian in A. D. 361.[9] It is interesting to note that Sri Lanka was known to the Byzantians by the name given to it by the Arabs.

Yet another event of profound significance which affected the trade patterns of the Indian Ocean was the rise of the Sassanid Persian empire in the third century A. D. Unlike Rome, Constantinople had no direct control over the Red Sea route to the Indian Ocean. Byzantian rulers depended on the Ethiopians of Axum to act as intermediaries for the procurement of Eastern goods, particularly Chinese silk. In this they faced stiff competition from the Sassanid Persians, who had built up a vast empire. They controlled a good part of the overland silk route to China from which they derived enormous profits by acting as intermediaries between the trading marts of Central Asia and the Byzantine empire. The Persians who aimed at a monopoly of this intermediary status in the East-West trade also improved their naval resources and by the sixth century A. D. they were the most important maritime traders of the Indian Ocean. Attempts made by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527–565 A. D.) to break the Persian monopoly by getting the Ethiopians to intervene, ended in failure.[10]

By this time the Persian traders were fully entrenched in the trading entrepots of India and Sri Lanka. In fact according to Cosmas, Sri Lanka in the sixth century A. D. was the most important entrepot and the Persians occupied a privileged position here because they brought horses (a commodity of great prestige) into the country.[11] Cosmas notices Ethiopian merchants in Sri Lanka. Also coins of Byzantine rulers up to Heraclius (613–641 A. D.) have been found in the island.[12] Arab historians, writing in the eleventh century A. D., refer to diplomatic contact between the rulers of Sri Lanka and Anusharwan (531–578 A. D.) of Persia. Al-Tabari, a tenth century writer, is no doubt exaggerating when he says that Anusharwan sent an army to **Sarandib** (Sri Lanka) and captured it.[13]

The period between the fourth and sixth centuries A. D. is generally considered to be a period of decline for the trade of Arabia. The

Himyarite Arab Kingdom came under the control of the Ethiopians between 340 and 378 A.D. and once again it was subdued by them in 524 A. D. Later the Persians took Himyar from the Ethiopians and continued to rule the kingdom until the Muslim conquest.[14] With the Ethiopians in command of the Red Sea route and the Persians dominating the Gulf and the Indian and Sri Lankan coasts, the Arabs receded into the background. However it is very likely that Arab traders continued to operate in Indian waters under one or other of these two commercial powers.

Thus by the time Islam appeared on the scene in the seventh century A. D., the Indian Ocean and more particularly its western half had seen a long and chequered history of navigation and trade. The commercial rivalries noticed above are an ample indication of the enormous profitability of this trade. Success in it depended on a number of factors such as political power, strategic location, availability of raw materials and the possession of good harbours. With the rise of Islam and the expansion of the Arab Empire under Muslim rule, all these factors converged to make Muslim participation a dominant factor in the trade of the Indian Ocean.

With the birth of Islam in the seventh century A. D. the Arabs emerged both as a political and a religious power. Within a short time the Arab empire embraced the whole of West Asia and also stretched across northern Africa to reach the Atlantic. To the east, Iran was conquered in the early years of Arab expansion and at the beginning of the eighth century A. D. they had extended their power to the Sind and Multan in India. The early growth of the Arab empire was the achievement of the northern Arabs who had no experience of oceanic trade. The Arabs of the south, however, had enjoyed a long history of maritime activity and their expertise was now put into very good use. But much more important was the rapid spread of Arab power as well as Islam into Iran and Egypt, both well known for their navigational and commercial experience. The Persians were the foremost navigators of the Indian Ocean at this time and now their trade became part of the general Muslim trade. Thus in a sense the continuity of the early trade of the Indian Ocean was maintained. However, the entry of the Arabs as a controlling power brought in a fresh dynamism and also a different pattern to this trade.

The expansion of Arab power to the West was bitterly challenged by the Byzantine rulers, resulting in a long drawn out struggle between them in the Mediterranean Sea. In the East, Arab activities were relatively peaceful, their political aspirations having stopped with the conquest of Sind and Multan in India. Arab, Persian and East African Muslims carried on their business ventures in the East through trading settlements established at port towns in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and China. By about the twelfth century Indians too came into the category of Muslim merchants. The extension of Muslim power into India was not the achievement of the Arabs but of certain Turkish dynasties who had become independent with the break up of the Arab empire around the tenth century A. D. Many Bengali and Gujerati merchants embraced Islam by the twelfth century and by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Indian Muslim merchants are noticed on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts. Therefore by the end of the period of this survey Muslim merchants were an amalgamation of many nationalities, united under the common banner of Islam. The significance of this common denominator should not be underestimated. Islam itself favoured sea-faring and commercial pursuits and the merchant enjoys a great deal of respect in Muslim society. The Muslim trader could travel from Europe to China confident of the hospitality of fellow Muslims at almost any sea-port at which he called. The pilgrimage to Mecca also kept most Muslim traders in touch with the centre of Islam and created among them a feeling of brotherhood.

The location and relative importance of many trade centres were to a large extent determined by the wind systems of the Indian Ocean. For instance it was not possible to travel from the Persian Gulf to Sumatra with the help of a single monsoon wind. Therefore ships had to break journey on the Indian or Sri Lankan coasts. The availability of merchandise, safe harbours, food, fresh water and the wherewithal for the repairing of ships were other considerations in the choice of ports. Persian and Arab ships were built of wooden planks held together with coir ropes. These were not strong enough to withstand really long voyages. Marco Polo, writing as late as the fourteenth century says, "Their ships are very bad, and many of them founder because they are not fastened with iron nails but stitched together with thread made of coconut husks . . . . . This makes it risky . . . . . and you can take my word for it that many of them sink, because the Indian Ocean is very stormy".[15] Therefore most trading communities tried to concentrate on just one segment of the East-West maritime routes. During the

period immediately preceding the seventh century A. D. Persian shipping stopped at Sri Lanka as a rule[16] although a few did reach China.[17] A change is noticed after the advent of Islam and from this time Persian Muslim merchants are known to frequent the Chinese port of Canton. In 671 A.D. Itsing travelled from Canton to Sri Vijaya in a Persian ship[18] and in 717 A. D. Vajrabodhi travelled from Sri Lanka to Sumatra in the company of thirty five Persian ships.[19]

That there was a steady growth of Arab and Persian merchants in Canton is brought out quite forcefully by the Canton rebellion of 758 A. D. The History of the Tang reveals that in that year the Arab and Persian merchants sacked and burned the city of Canton.[20] This gives us some indication of their numerical strength and economic power. A statement in the T'ang Chronicles that several thousands of Persian and Arab merchants were killed in an uprising in Yang-Chou in 760 A.D.[21] also reveals the fact that a large number of Muslim merchants had taken up residence in China.

The evidence presented so far suggests that the Persians played a dominant role during the earliest phase of Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka had been the chief trade entrepot of the Sassanian Persians and one could expect them to have continued visiting the island for purposes of trade. However, the Persian Muslims and their Arab masters were operating in a very different commercial climate. Direct voyages to Canton made it possible for Muslim merchants to buy silk and other Chinese goods at their very source, thus reducing the importance of the Sri Lankan entrepot trade and the role of Sri Lankan merchants as middlemen. Another factor which militated against Sri Lanka was the rise of Sri Vijaya around the seventh century as an emporium in the trade between India and China. In a recent study R. A. L. H. Gunawardhana has suggested that periods of prolific activity in the building of irrigation works in Sri Lanka coincided with the most flourishing periods of trade. The explanation for this is that commercial gain provided the resources for hydraulic engineering. He points out that there was only one new major irrigation project undertaken between the seventh and ninth centuries, in sharp contrast to the intense irrigation activity in the period immediately preceding.[22] It is extremely significant that the growth of Arab sea-faring in the Indian Ocean corresponds to exactly this period, reaching a peak in the ninth century A. D. There seems to be some correlation here. The indications of diminishing trade or more precisely diminishing profits from trade as far as Sri Lanka was concerned are understandable.

The Arabs were now operating as middlemen eliminating local participation. Obviously, this change did not take place overnight and there are other indications of this phenomenon.

Sri Lanka which had sent regular missions to China from as early as the first century A. D. continued to do so until 762 A. D. The traditional foreign trade of China was the "tributary trading system", whereby the privilege of trading with that country was restricted to missions bringing 'tribute'. Therefore it was imperative that all traders visit the Chinese ports. Sinhalese merchants visiting China were acting as intermediaries between China and the West. They seem to have acted as middlemen on the China route even after the advent of the Muslim trader but after 762 A. D. this trade seems to have ceased. It was revived only about two hundred years later[23] This same phenomenon is noticed with regard to the trade of Sri Vijaya which ceased to send missions to China after 742 A.D. They were resumed only at the beginning of the tenth century A. D. This too has been related to the successful take over of the role of middlemen by Persian and Arab merchants in the Nanhai trade.[24]

Equally significant is the fact that between the seventh and tenth centuries four Sinhalese rulers left Anuradhapura and ruled from the northeastern city of Polonnaruwa which could command the port of Trincomalee, facing the Bay of Bengal and the new centres of trade.

A word of caution is perhaps necessary at this point. What has been noticed so far is that during the first phase of Muslim commerce in the Indian Ocean there was a major change in the pattern of trade, due not only to Muslim trading activity but also to other factors such as the rise of Sri Vijaya. One cannot however overlook the possibility that these events were in turn inter-connected. Although these trends had a serious impact on the political and economic developments of Sri Lanka, they did not mean a total eclipse of the foreign trade of the island. The available evidence points to Mahatittha continuing as a trade emporium and to Sri Lanka participating in this trade by providing port facilities. It would seem that the role of Sri Lankans as middlemen in the East-West trade suffered a set-back due to Arab intervention.

The very intimate contact maintained with the Sassanian Persians would perhaps explain the very early contact Sri Lanka had with Islam

and the Arab Muslim world. Ibn Shahriyar, the author of the **Ajaib-al-Hind** or 'Marvels of India', dated to about 960 A.D., records that the people of Sri Lanka had heard about the Prophet and his teachings which prompted the ruler (Aggabodhi III?) to send an envoy to Arabia on what could be termed a 'fact-finding mission.' The journey is said to have taken a long time, which is quite understandable when one considers the hazards of ocean travel during these times and the confused state of Persian shipping immediately after the Arab conquest of that country. It is stated that when the envoy did reach Madinah, the Prophet was dead and so was Abu Bakr the first Caliph. He met the Caliph Umar (654-664) but on the return journey the envoy himself died on the Makran coast. We are told that his Hindi servant returned to give a report to the Sri Lankan ruler.[25] There is no doubt that the enormous profits that Sri Lanka derived from the Persian trade was at stake with the expansion of the Arab empire eastwards. In these circumstances, an attempt to establish diplomatic contact with the centre of the new empire is well within the realms of probability. Attention has been drawn to the fact that although Ibn Shahriyar refers to Sri Lanka by the usual Arab term **Sarandib**, he states that the country was also known as **Saheelan**.[26] If this term goes back to the source from which this author derived his story, then it may add a further note of authenticity to it. That Muslim merchant settlements existed in Sri Lanka in the seventh century A. D. is evident from al-Balazuri, a writer who belonged to the ninth century. According to him, just prior to the conquest of Sind by the Arab governor of Iraq (C. 710 A.D.), the Sri Lankan ruler had sent to Iraq the daughters of some Muslim merchants who had died in the island.[27] Obviously these merchants like their counterparts in other parts of South and Southeast Asia married local wives and one would like to think that of these marriages, some at least were permanent arrangements.

Recent archaeological excavations at Mantai have revealed that the ancient port of Mahatittha was an integral part of the trading network which linked the Persian Gulf ports with India and Sri Lanka during the Sassanian period and the period of Arab ascendancy. Middle Eastern ceramics which have been roughly dated to the eighth to the eleventh century A.D. period and corresponding Chinese ceramics found at Mantai are thought to be indicative of an entrepot trade at this port. Precise dating of the ceramics discovered will no doubt lead to a firmer chronology but what seems to be conclusive is the continuous use of Mantai for foreign trade and its links with the Persian Gulf ports

throughout the period of Arab dominance in the Indian Ocean. Attention has been drawn to the baobab trees (Adansonia digitata) which grows along the coast near Mantai. These particular trees are indigenous to East Africa and it is believed that they were introduced here in the wake of Arab trade.[28] It must be made clear that these finds need not contradict the earlier deductions that there was a decline in the foreign trade of Sri Lanka, more particularly in the involvement of Sri Lankan merchants.

The ninth century saw the Muslims as the dominant traders along the entire maritime route from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to Canton. These traders brought back to Arabia a wealth of information regarding distant lands. Perhaps arising from it was a serious pursuit of geographical knowledge among the Arabs from the ninth century onwards. Sri Lanka was well known to these writers, merchants returning home being their natural informants. The ninth century marked the heyday of the famous port of Siraf on the Persian Gulf, a meeting place of ships and merchants, both Arab and non-Arab. The archaeologists who excavated at Mantai have specially mentioned the Siraf link in terms of ceramic finds at the site.

One of the earliest extant Arab texts on the East is the **Akhbār-as-Sin Wa'l-Hind,** 'Tales of India and China,' written in 851 A.D. and traditionally attributed to Sulaiman the Merchant. The authorship of the book seems to be in serious doubt.[29] However there is general agreement that it incorporates information gathered from Arab merchants travelling to the East during the ninth century A.D. and before. This book was commented on by Abu Zaid in C. 916 A.D., supplementing it with information gathered from merchants and sailors frequenting the port of Siraf.[30] Another ninth century text of topographical significance is the **Kitab al – masalik wa'l mamalik** 'Book of the Roads and Kingdoms.' It was written in about 850 A. D. at the request of the Caliph and describes the sea route from the Persian Gulf to China. Al Baladhuri was a ninth century historian, who has incorporated information regarding the East that was available to him. The Sinbad voyages of unknown date are traditionally thought to have taken place during the reign of Caliph Haroun al Rashid (786 – 809A.D.). It is believed that these tales, the details of which seem to be of doubtful veracity, have grown round the geographical knowledge of the East acquired by the Arabs by the end of the ninth century A. D. and compiled towards the end of that century or at

the beginning of the next.[31] The information in these texts make it quite clear that Sri Lanka was a familiar port of call of Arab merchants in the Indian Ocean. There were a number of alternative routes from the Persian Gulf to China. Sometimes ships coasted along the Iranian and West Indian coasts. There were others which sailed straight across the sea and reached the ports of Malabar. From Malabar ships sailed to Sri Lanka or sometimes avoided Sri Lanka altogether and headed for the ports of Southeast Asia and then on to Canton. Not all Muslim ships covered the entire route. Destinations depended on the trading interests of the men who master-minded these voyages. Ship captains often had to use their discretion regarding stop-overs. The vagaries of the weather such as a delayed monsoon or stormy seas, a torn ship or the need for food or fresh water and a host of other eventualities on this hazardous journey were deciding factors in the choice of ports.

In 1980/81 Tim Severin demonstrated a ninth century Arab voyage from Oman to China by building a typical Arab ship and sailing it to Canton with the help of the monsoon wind. The fascinating account of his experiences[32] gives us an idea of at least some of the dangers of Muslim merchant shipping of this period. Ships sailing from the Western ports made use of the northeast monsoon to get to the ports of western India, whether it was Surat or Malabar. Coasting was possible at most times, Ships proceeding to Southeast Asia, however, had to make use of the southwest monsoon, and the last stop they could wait for the change of monsoon was Sri Lanka. Having left the Malabar coast Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka was the next landmark which Muslim navigators looked out for. To them it was also the sacred mountain with the foot print of Adam. The legend, according to Muslim sources, is that Adam, cast away from paradise, placed one foot on the mountain and the other foot on the sea.[33] **Sarandib** in their view, was next to paradise, a favoured coast and ships waiting for the turn of wind had no reason to avoid its ports. **Sarandib** the name given to Sri Lanka by ninth century Arab writers means 'the land of rubies' and gems provided one of the major attractions as far as the Muslim trader was concerned. Supplementary evidence for this contact can be found in the Arab coins of the eighth and ninth centuries which are found in the coin collections of the British and Colombo Museums.[34]

The end of the ninth century marked a turning-point in the pattern of Muslim trade in Asia. In 878 A.D. a Chinese rebel massacred 120,000 foreigners in Canton and among them are said to have been Muslims, Christians, Jews and non-Muslim Persians.[35] From this time Arab

ships stopped going to Canton as a rule. Henceforth Indian and Southeast Asian ports became their destination. The pre-eminence of Muslim trade in Asian waters was shaken and many countries stepped in to fill the vacuum created by their withdrawal from the south China sea. The countries of Southeast Asia, chief among them Sri Viyaya, resumed their intermediary trade with China and Muslim traders called at South and Southeast Asian ports for East Asian goods.These developments provided a fresh filip to the trade of the Bay of Bengal giving rise to intense competition and rivalry in the area. By the end of the tenth century the Colas of South India began to follow an aggressive commercial policy which led to hostility with Sri Vijaya in the early part of the eleventh century. Sri Lanka too came within the orbit of Cola trade during this period. Towards the end of the eleventh century however Sri Lanka was free to pursue its own commercial interests. With the transfer of the capital from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa, Sri Lankan rulers attached a great deal of importance to the Bay of Bengal trade which culminated in a trade war with Burma during the reign of Parakramabahu 1 (1153 – 1186 A. D.[36] State interest and participation in foreign trade is amply borne out by the evidence relating to the reign of this ruler. Sri Lanka, like many others in the Bay of Bengal littoral, was trying to play the role of intermediary trader, stocking its ports with merchandise sought after by the traders of West Asia and East Africa.

How does Muslim trade fit into the above scenario of the tenth to the twelfth centuries A.D. ? By the end of the ninth century the Arab empire of the Abbasid Caliphs was beginning to fall apart. However the expansion of Muslim rule continued under independent dynasties, and religion remained a uniting factor despite the lack of political cohesion. A major catastrophe which struck Muslim trade towards the end of the tenth century was the destruction of the port of Siraf by an earthquake.[37] This port on the Persian Gulf was the principal pivot round which Muslim trade revolved and its fall would have been a severe set-back at the time. The break up of the empire, the withdrawal from the ports of China and the destruction of Siraf – all this would certainly have had adverse effects on Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean. Also these events seem to have had some bearing on the revival of Sri Vijayan trade, Cola Commercial policy and the interest of countries like Sri Lanka in the trade of the eastern part of the Indian Ocean. As for the Arabian Sea, Muslim traders seem to have held their former pre-eminence, trading from alternative ports such as Zohar and Muscat and also the ports of East Africa.[38]

Arab writers of the tenth to the twelfth centuries continue to refer to links with Sri Lanka but not all these accounts are a completely satisfactory guide to study the intensity of this trade or its relative importance in terms of the country's economy. Many of these writers derive their information from merchants at the ports of West Asia and some depend on earlier works. Very few write from their own experience.[39] Despite these limitations one can discern that by the end of the tenth century West Asian writers had gained a fairly intimate knowledge of Sri Lanka through commercial links. The changes in the pattern of maritime trade at the end of the ninth century, noticed already, resulted in the new intermediaries of the China trade bringing East Asian goods not only to the entrepots of Southeast Asia but also further west to India and Sri Lanka. Consequently more and more Muslim merchants began to frequent the coasts of Sri Lanka and South India.

Trade connections between Sri Lanka and China, which were broken off probably due to the Arab presence were resumed in the tenth century. This is brought out by the contents of two hoards of Chinese coins discovered at Polonnaruwa and Yapahuwa. Of these coins, the earliest belong to the seventh century and all the others are dated between 976 A.D. and the thirteenth century.[40] This evidence suggests the availability of Chinese goods and perhaps the presence of Chinese merchants in Sri Lanka and fits in with the pattern of trade described so far.

Three tenth century Muslim writers, Istakhri, Ibn Hawqual and Maqdisi speak of **Sarandib** as the final destination of Muslim navigators.[41] Some of these merchants came to Sri Lanka for local products listed by Istakhri as spices, aloes wood, medicinal herbs and rubies. An extremely valued item was **dooshab,** treacle, coveted by kings and nobles, according to this author.[42] The earliest reference to cinnamon as a product of Sri Lanka is found in the tenth century work of Buzurg b. Shahriyar, titled **Ajā'ib al Hind** or the 'Wonders of India.[43] The gems of Sri Lanka was the commodity which had the greatest fascination for the Muslim merchants. They had a fairly intimate knowledge of this industry. Ibn Wahab, quoted by Abu Zayd, in the tenth century, says that gems were partly mined and that some were collected from the mouths of rivers.[44] Adam's Peak, situated in the heart of the gem producing area of Sri Lanka became a favourite place of pilgrimage where religious devotion and commercial interest went hand in hand. Ibn Batuta who says that the first Muslim pilgrim to Adam's Peak,

Abū Abdullah ibn al Khafīf, visited Sri Lanka in the tenth century, provides us with the additional information that the pilgrim returned with two gems of an unusually large size, which he presented to the king.[45]

The existence of Arab settlements around the tenth century. A. D. in Colombo and in the environs of Mannar and Anuradhapura can be inferred from certain tomb-stones erected over Muslim burials at these sites. According to the Arabic inscription on the tomb-stone found at Colombo, it was erected over the burial of a Muslim religious teacher, Khalid Ibn Abou Bakya. Another tomb-stone which can be dated to about the same period has been found at Puliyantivu near Mannar, and a similar find has been reported from a place "some miles off the Anuradhapura-Puttalam road".[46] This evidence suggests that in addition to Mantai, the port of Colombo too afforded facilities to Muslim traders during this time.

There is very little evidence to chart the fortunes of Muslim trade through the dark days of Cola occupation in Sri Lanka in the eleventh century A. D. It has been suggested that the Muslims would have tried to defend their trade settlements in the wake of South Indian invasions.[47] This however is mere conjecture. The Sinhalese resistance to the Cola onslaught moved to the south of the island and it is possible that the Muslim merchants followed them there. Archaeological investigations carried out at Mantai in 1980 have led to the view that "the end of the role of Mantai as a major trade centre of the northwest coast of Sri Lanka can be tentatively dated in the second half of the eleventh century."[48] The major trading interests of the Colas were in the Bay of Bengal which led to the choice of Polonnaruwa as their capital in Sri Lanka. It is this change that is reflected in the Mantai finds. The inevitable conclusion seems to be that Muslim trade was adversely affected during the period of Cola occupation.

With the withdrawal of the Colas, Sri Lanka was able to pursue its own independent trade policies. From Vijayabahu 1 (1055–1110 A.D.) onwards most Sinhalese rulers of the Polonnaruwa Kingdom followed an extremely vigorous commercial policy and profits from foreign trade formed a vital section of The Sri Lankan economy during this period. Parākramabāhu I even resorted to a war with Burma in order to safeguard the country's trade interest.[49] The issues involved in this war shows that Sri Lankan traders were acting as middlemen for the

elephant trade. South India appears to have been a second source from which Sri Lanka imported elephants. Horses were another sought after commodity. The Nainativu inscription[50] of Parākramabāhu 1 written in Tamil, was addressed to foreign merchants, perhaps more particularly to South Indian merchants, visiting the northern port of Uratturai (modern Kayts). According to the King's proclamation foreign merchants were welcome at the ports of Sri Lanka and were assured of protection. It states further that elephants and horses were of special interest and if vessels carrying them were wrecked off the coast of Sri Lanka only a fourth share of the cargo was to be taken by the treasury. Ships carrying other merchandise had to pay half. It is a well known fact that West Asia was the main source from which India imported horses and the chief carriers were Muslim merchants.[51] While it is quite possible that these horses were in turn brought to Sri Lanka through South Indian intermediaries, it is very likely that at least a part of the trade in horses was transacted directly with West Asian merchants. With kings like Parākarmabāhu I exerting themselves to improve the entrepot trade of Sri Lanka, Muslim merchants would have found it a rewarding destination.

An Arabic geographical treatise of the twelfth century A. D. which gives some detailed attention to Sri Lanka is the work of Idrisi. Apart from the country's products such as gems and perfumes he refers to twelve cities and even more intriguing is his statement that the king was assisted by a Council of sixteen, four Buddhists, four Christians, four Muslims and four Jews. It has been suggested that this is perhaps a reference to a Council which assisted the king in foreign trade.[52] There is no gainsaying that all four categories of people played an important part in the foreign trade of Sri Lanka. The idea of a Council could have sprung from this knowledge. On the whole Idrisi is not considered a reliable authority on Asian affairs.[53] The dearth of material relating to Muslim contact with Sri Lankan trade during one of its most dynamic periods might suggest that the role of the Muslim merchant was not very significant at the time as far as Sri Lanka was concerned. Contrary to this is the fact that the twelfth century was one of the most flourishing periods of West Asian trade with India as seen by the Geniza records.[54] The active participation of Sri Lankans in the Indian Ocean trade as middlemen, state intervention and support and the presence of a Sri Lankan navy gave Muslim traders fewer opportunities. However, as noted earlier, Sri Lanka made every effort to attract foreign merchants and there is no doubt that among those who arrived at the ports of the island were Muslim merchants. Generals of

Parākramabāhu I who had invaded South India are said to have granted favours to the **Vessas** and **Yavanas** who come to see them.[55] This no doubt is a reference to the mercantile sector, the Indian and Muslim merchants who already had, or wished to establish trade contacts with Sri Lanka. With the capital at Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee was the main port where foreign merchants assembled. That there was a Muslim community here can be deduced from a tomb-stone inscription found at Trincomalee.[56] Dated towards the end of the Polonnaruwa kingdom, this was erected over the burial of a Muslim Quazi who would probably have ministered to the merchant settlers in the area.

The downfall of Polonnaruwa in the mid-thirteenth century saw the shifting of Sri Lanka's political capital to the southwest, the centre of maritime activity also having shifted from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. By the middle of the thirteenth century major changes had taken place in the pattern of trade in the Indian Ocean. The Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1278 A.D.) of China had abandoned the 'tributary trading system' and permitted overseas trade to Chinese vessels and merchants. Accompanying this radical departure from traditional policy were the great advances made in Chinese naval technology.[57] These development resulted in the large scale entry of Chinese ships and merchants into the Indian Ocean. Sri Vijaya, whose economic stability had depended on the intermediary trade between China and the Southeast Asian ports, began to decline in the twelfth century A.D. and had lost its former position by the middle of the thirteenth century. Sri Vijaya was not the only country that was affected. Sri Lanka too had benefited during the heyday of Sri Vijayan commerce and with its decline the trade of the Bay of Bengal as well as the trade of Sri Lanka was affected. Chao Ju-Kua[58] writing at the beginning of the thirteenth century and Marco Polo[59] a little later speak of Chinese ships sailing up to the Malabar coast. Therefore Muslim traders could purchase Chinese goods at these ports. West Asian traders continued to visit the Bay of Bengal and the countries of Southeast Asia for the primary products of these regions as well as East Asian goods. But the main hub of East-West exchange trade had shifted to the Arabian Sea by the thirteenth century. This was a major reason why Sri Lankan rulers were attracted to Southwestern capitals during this time.

Muslim trade established its closest ties with Sri Lanka after the middle of the thirteenth century. Al Qazwini, a Muslim Encyclopaedist of the

late thirteenth century, speaks knowledgeably of Sri Lanka and the arrival in Baghdad of a Muslim lawyer of distinction from there.[60] Wassaf describes Sri Lanka in glowing terms and seems to suggest that the advantages of trade between Sri Lanka and the Muslims were weighted on the side of the former.[61] Marco Polo who travelled from China to the Persian Gulf in a Chinese ship is a useful authority on maritime trade in the Indian Ocean towards the end of the thirteenth century. He broke journey in Sri Lanka which would have been on the usual East-West maritime route. Reference is made to the immense wealth of gems in Sri Lanka and he attaches great importance to the presence of Muslims in the country. His statement that Sri Lankan rulers hired Muslim soldiers is interesting.[62] Merchants were forced to employ soldiers to combat piracy in the Arabian Sea and the soldiers whom Marco Polo speaks of may have been there to guard Muslim trading interests. This brings out even more forcefully the importance attached to the Sri Lankan trade. That piracy was a problem around Colombo is mentioned by Ibn Batuta a little later.[63] Involved in this trade were both Muslim and Hindu merchants, Indian and Arab. Efforts were made by some Sri Lankan rulers to exclude the Indian middlemen and enter into direct trade with Egypt and West Asia. To quote an Arabic document of the thirteenth century which refers to an embassy sent by Bhuvenaikabāhu I (1272–84) :

> *"Ceylon is Egypt and Egypt is Ceylon. I desire that an Egyptian ambassador accompany mine on his return and that another be sent to reside in the town of Aden. I possess a prodigious quantity of pearls and precious stones of every kind. I have vessels, elephants, muslin and other stuffs, brazil wood, cinnamon and other objects of commerce which are brought to you by the* **banian** *merchants. My kingdom produces trees, the wood of which is fit for marking spears. If the Sultan asks me for twenty vessels yearly, I shall be in a position to supply them. Further, the merchants of his dominions can with all freedom come to trade in my Kingdom. I have received an ambassador of the Prince of Yemen, who has come on behalf of his master to make me proposals of alliance. But I have sent him away through my affection for the Sultan. I possess twenty seven castles of which the treasuries are filled with precious stones of all kinds. The pearl fisheries are part of my dominions and all that is taken there belongs to me."*[64]

The outcome of this mission is not known. However, one can see that state trading was attempted and efforts were also made to attract Muslim merchants from countries such as Egypt. These links with Egypt are confirmed by a number of Muslim coins of the thirteenth century found between Colombo and the hill country. Among them, the greater number belongs to Sultan Qulāūn of Egypt,[65] the king to whom Bhuvenaikabāhu I sent his envoys. In this connection one could point to a recent find of four Sri Lankan coins, the last of which belongs to Bhuvenaikabāhu I, at Mogadishu in Kenya.[66]

As far as local evidence relating to the thirteenth century is concerned, apart from the coin finds already mentioned, there is a fragmentary inscription, written in Arabic on a rock surface at Adam's Peak. The document simply records an invocation for the blessings of the Prophet.[67] It would seem that Adam's Peak in the gem country held its spell for Muslim merchants. West Asian perfumes and incense were well known and sought after commodities in Sri Lanka at this time. A Sinhalese text of the thirteenth century refers to the four kinds of scents as **Kokum, Yon pup, Tuvaralā** and **Turuk tel** – saffron, sandalwood(?), frankincense and Turkish oil.[68]

Moving on to the fourteenth century we have one of the most informative and authentic accounts of the Sri Lanka – Muslim connection from the writings of Ibn Batuta.[69] This inveterate traveller, who calls himself a pilgrim, arrived in Sri Lanka in about 1344 A.D. The highlight of his visit was the pilgrimage to Adam's Peak. While in the gem country he takes note of the fact that the more valuable stones are reserved for the King who buys them and the rest belongs to those who find them. Muslim merchants seem to have attempted to buy these gems at their source. Ibn Batuta was informed of an earlier period when Muslim traders were not given access to the interior. But by the fourteenth century or perhaps even a little earlier, they were not only in a position of privilege but even in a position of power in certain areas. Ibn Batuta seems to have visited some of the port towns in which there were Muslim settlers. Outside the capital city, which is named **Konakar** (the identification of this place is controversial) there was, according to him the mosque of Shaikh Usman of Shiraz. This Muslim priest who acted as a guide to pilgrims going up to Adam's Peak, had slaughtered a cow. His hand and foot were cut off, a lenient punishment, death being the usual penalty. Being a man who was held in high esteem, he was compensated by a grant of taxes from a certain

market. This suggests that the Muslims had a role in the country's internal trade. The mosque would indicate their presence in the capital in some mumerical strength. Ibn Batuta visited Devinuvara and noticed many Muslim merchants there. Ships of Muslim traders seem to have called at the port of Galle for here he met a ship captain, Ibrahim, who had a residence in the town. Colombo was the premier port, of which Ibn Batuta gives a glowing description. It was controlled by a certain Jalasti who is said to have had hundred Abyssinians under him. This was a period of political turmoil in Sri Lanka. In the north was an independent Tamil Kingdom and there was political dissension among the Sinhalese leaders of the south. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the control of the port had passed into the hands of the leading merchant community. It is not clear whether this individual was acting in an independent capacity. Marignolli,[70] a European friar who came to Sri Lanka about five years after Ibn Batuta, complains that he was robbed by a Muslim pirate, Coya Jaan (Khwaja Jahan) when he arrived at the port of **Pervilis,** identified as Beruwela. According to Marignolli, Coya Jaan had gained control of this part of the Kingdom. It has been suggested that he was the same as Jalasti.[71]

Thus in the middle of the fourteenth century Muslim merchants and ship masters wielded a great deal of influence at the port towns of southwestern Sri Lanka. As suggested earlier, the disturbed politics of the time would have made this possible. However, the position of the Muslim traders was not unchallenged. Part of Sri Lanka's foreign trade was in the hands of Arya Cakravarti, who according to Ibn Batuta had his own ships and even engaged in piratical activities. The pearl fishery was under his control and so were some of the cinnamon lands. Cinnamon was sold to the Malabar merchants. Arya Cakravarti had close links with the Pandyan kingdom on the Coromandel coast and Ibn Batuta was given hospitality on introducing himself as a close friend of the king of Coromandel. Muslim merchants carried on an extremely lucrative trade with this region and Arya Cakravarti himself is said to have spoken fluent Persian. It would seem however, that Muslim merchants did not wield the same power and control at the northern ports as they did in the south. This position changed with the capital of the Sinhalese Kingdom shifting to Kotte. Sinhalese rulers regained control of not only the southwestern ports but the northern ports as well.

The choice of Raigama and later Kotte as the seat of power by the Alakesvara family towards the end of the fourteenth century can in a

sense be interpreted as an attempt to gain control of the profits of trade enjoyed by the Muslims at the port of Colombo. In fact trade seems to have formed the power base of the Alakesvara family and thus they used to challenge the authority of the main ruling dynasty at Gampola. With the accession of Parākramabāhu VI (1412 – 1467 A.D.) Kotte became the capital of the Sinhalese rulers. This monarch succeeded in extending his power throughout the island and with this gigantic feat he was able to control all the outlets from which the foreign trade of the country could be handled. He seems to have had his own trading vessels. The **Rājāvaliya** records that Sri Lankan ships sent to South India for trade were robbed and Parākramabāhu VI retaliated by sending warships to attack the port of **Atvirarāma Pattana (Adriampet).**[72] Counter claims are made by .Vijayanagara rulers to victories in Sri Lanka. These events make it clear that Sri Lanka was once again taking the initiative in matters relating to foreign trade.

Muslim traders and settlements were very much part of the Sri Lankan landscape according to the Sinhalese literary works of the fifteenth century. The **Kokila** and **Girā Sandesas** refer to Muslim women **(Yon liya),**[73] and a Muslim settlement at Mahavaligama, in southern Sri Lanka, is referred to in the former text.[74] Beruwela figures as a Muslim trading centre frequented by foreign ships.[75]

With the death of Parākramabāhu VI the country reverted back to political division. Sri Lankan rulers appear to have allowed Muslim and South Indian Hindu merchants, more particularly the former, to take over control of the foreign trade of the country. This was the situation when the Portuguese found their way into Sri Lanka, bringing about far-reaching consequences for Sri Lankan trade and the role of the Muslims in it.

A general issue which concerns Muslim trade with Sri Lanka is its 'Indianisation'. Muslim rule had extended throughout northern India and the Deccan by the middle of the fourteenth century and many Gujerati and Bengali merchants seem to have embraced Islam. This in turn led to the strengthening of the Muslim trading communities of the Coromandel and Malabar coasts. Their influx into Sri Lanka was only to be expected. There is a general assumption that West Asian Muslims were gradually withdrawing from the Indian trade after the thirteenth century and that they were becoming increasingly dependent on Indian Muslims for Eastern goods.[76] Persian was the official language of Muslim India. Ibn Batuta makes the point that Arya

Cakravarti of Jaffna spoke fluent Persian. Also the **Galle trilingual slat inscription** set up by the Chinese ship captain Cheng Ho in 1410 A.D. is inscribed in Persian, Tamil and Chinese.[77] This document contains lists of offerings to the deities of the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. The inscription was obviously set up for the benefit of the merchant community at Galle. This is a clear indication that even in the early fifteenth century the external trade of Southern Sri Lanka was still in the hands of foreign merchants, among them Persian speaking Muslims. The prevalence of Persian may not indicate an Iranian connection but links with Muslim India. Barbosa, a Portuguese captain, writing in the sixteenth century says that the Muslims of the Indian coast came to Sri Lanka constantly and established themselves here.[78] It is fairly well established now that the conversion of Indonesia to Islam was the work of Indian Muslims, who went there for trade in the first instance. The fact that the Muslims of Sri Lanka speak Tamil supports the link with South India but at what point of time remains conjectural.

Muslim trade with Sri Lanka presents an undulating pattern of growth culminating in an almost monopoly situation by the end of the fifteenth century. These merchants were attracted to Sri Lanka mainly by its gems and to some extent pearls. Cinnamon, treacle, scented wood, elephants and medical herbs were some of the other items which find mention in Arab sources. There were times when Sri Lankan ports took on the role of entrepots and Muslim merchants came to Sri Lanka for East Asian goods such as silk and porcelain. In return the major imports of Sri Lanka were horses, cloth, incense, perfumes, wine, gold and silver. The balance of trade seems to have fluctuated and may have depended on the amount of control Sri Lankan rulers had over the country's foreign trade at different times. Another factor to be noted is that by and large the South Indian ports held the main attraction for the Muslim merchants of West Asia and East Africa, and Sri Lanka was the next port of call after the Malabar Coast. With the Islamisation of the South Indian ports, some part of the traditional trade with South India merged with the Muslim trade. However, the Hindu trader was not completely eliminated. That these two groups continued to remain an influential merchant class in Sri Lanka, despite the long centuries of European rule, is perhaps a mark of their resiliency.

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11

THE ROLE OF PENINSULAR INDIAN MUSLIM TRADING COMMUNITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TRADE

K. Indrapala

The activities of the Muslim traders of Peninsular India in the period c.A.D. 1000 to 1500 are closely linked with the origin of the Muslim settlements that we see today in Sri Lanka and the countries of Southeast Asia, none of which was in any way subjected to the military expeditions of Muslim rulers either from West Asia or from India. The Muslim settlements in Sri Lanka and the Islamisation of Malaysia and Indonesia were the result of the activities of Muslim traders, both from Peninsular India and from West Asia. This paper attempts to provide part of the historical background to the growth of Muslim communities in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

The Indian Ocean

There is some controversy regarding the boundaries and extent of the Indian Ocean. It is common to consider the whole watery region south of Iran, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, bounded on the west by the Arabian Peninsula and Africa and on the east by the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia and Australia, as the Indian Ocean. In this consideration it extends up to the Antarctica and includes the Antarctic Ocean as well. That would make the total area of the Indian Ocean about 28,000,000 square miles.[1] This, however, is not accepted by all. There is no general agreement regarding the southern boundary or the eastern limits of the ocean.

There are two main views about the former—one which treats the Antarctic Ocean as part of the Indian Ocean and the other which excludes the Antarctic and draws the line at 35^{o} south latitude. According to the latter view, the area of the Indian Ocean would be only 16,362,742 square miles.[2]

However, from a historical point of view, it is only the area north of the Equator that is of significance to us until modern times. This was the scene of the activities of the various seafaring communities of ancient and medieval Asia and the Mediterranean. This area north of the Equator is "made up of two distinct seas: a 'western sea' on the left of the Indian Peninsula, and an 'eastern sea' on the right".[3] Maritime activities have been observed in both sectors at a very early date. The Egyptians, Sumerians, Indus people, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans were active in the western sea in ancient times, while the Persians, Arabs, Gujaratis, Tamils, Bengalis, Malays and Chinese have navigated the whole ocean in later times.

In the earliest period the trade routes hugged the coast from the Red Sea to the southern tip of India and Sri Lanka on the one side, and from the Straits of Malacca to the eastern coast of India on the other. After the tenth century there were well-defined routes across the Indian Ocean, of which the most important were: "from Malacca to Gujerat; from Gujerat to the Red Sea; from Malabar to the Red Sea; from Gujerat to Malabar and the intermediate ports on the western coast; from Aden to Hurmuz; from East Africa to Gujerat; from Gujerat to Hurmuz. Various feeder routes linked areas such as Ceylon, Bengal, Siam, and Coromandel to the great centres of Malacca, Calicut Cambay, Hurmuz and the Red Sea."[4]

Peninsular Indian Muslim Communities

At the time of the rise of Islam, in the seventh century A. D., the Persians and the Arabs from West Asia, the Gujaratis, the Tamils and the Bengalis from South Asia, and the Malays from Southeast Asia shared the trade of the Indian Ocean along the aforementioned routes. None of them could be said to have dominated the Indian Ocean trade at that time. But soon the situation changed. As summed up by Toussaint, "With the advent of Islam in the seventh century A.D., the Arabs conquered Persia and controlled the Persian Gulf. Under the Abbasid Caliphs, Islamic sea power was at its height. With the decline of the Abbasids in the tenth century and the rise of the Fatimids in Egypt, the center of Islamic sea power shifted from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, while Moslem colonies developed in East Africa, Gujerat, and Malabar."[5]

At this time very powerful Hindu mercantile communities were actively participating in the overseas trade of the Indian Kingdoms, especially in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean.[6] These communities had established themselves all along the western and eastern coasts of Peninsular India

and had founded trading settlements in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia as well as in some of the West Asian ports. Later they had such settlements even in China.

It was among these communities, with whom they had already established friendly and close trade relations, that the Arabs and the Persians spread their new religion and paved the way for the emergence of powerful Muslim trading communities in Peninsular India. As Norman D. Palmer puts it, "the countries of South Asia – India, Pakistan, Ceylon and the Republic of the Maldives – with by far the largest concentration of people anywhere in the area could be considered the epicenter of the Indian Ocean region."[7] And Peninsular India occupies a central position in this region. When it comes to trade, the vital role of the peninsular Indian coast from very ancient times is undeniable. It is therefore no surprise that with the rise of Islamic power in West Asia the Muslims lost no time in spreading their influence in the major ports of Peninsular India.

Immigration and conversion were the two major factors that influenced the growth of Muslim communities in this region. By the ninth century the Arabs had established several settlements in many of the ports of the western coast, from Gujarat to Kerala. According to the Arab historian Baladhuri, there were notable settlements of Muslim merchants on the Malabar coast and in several cities as far north as the Indus.[8]

Once these Arab settlements were founded, the pattern of growth was no doubt similar to that described by C. R. Boxer as having taken place in countries beyond the peninsula. The foreign Muslim traders "inevitably took wives, temporary or otherwise, from among the women of the ports where they stayed while awaiting the favourable monsoons for their return voyage. Their children were almost invariably raised as Muslims; and when they grew up they in their turn helped to spread the faith among their mothers' compatriots. These various Muslim trading colonies grew and flourished; and their richest and most influential traders were sooner or later granted the right to build mosques in the ports where they lived. They then sent for **Mullahs,** or religious teachers, who in their turn helped to attract many other Muslims from elsewhere and to propagate Islam locally."[9]

It has been found that conversion accounts for the vast majority of the Indian Muslims. Sometimes even whole communities were converted as in the case of the Khojas, the Bohras and the Memans.[10] Many of these

converts were from the poorer classes and the foreign Muslim settlers did not as a rule get integrated into the local population. But the local converts maintained very close ties with the foreign Muslims.[11]

In this manner were born the various Peninsular Indian Muslim communities. The military conquest of Indian regions by Muslim invaders had very little to do with the origin and growth of these communities. Indeed the sea played no part in the conquests and the coastal Muslim communities were almost entirely commercial in origin. The Muslim conquests neither interrupted nor activated the pace of the maritime trade between India and the Muslim countries of West Asia.[12] These new Muslim communities of Peninsular India "had no continuous and living contact with the centres of culture in the north" and it would appear that "the eyes of the predominant merchant communities were turned to the lands across the seas in the west rather than towards the mainland and Delhi."[13]

The Muslim trading communities of Peninsular India belong to three major coastal areas, namely the Gujarat and the Kerala (Malabar) coast on the west and the Tamilnadu (Coromandel) coast on the east. The Gujarati Muslims were among the most influential and powerful communities that traded in the Indian Ocean from about the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, while the Kerala and Tamilnadu Muslims were of considerable significance in the trade of the eastern part of the Ocean during the same period.

The Muslim communities of the coasts of Peninsular India, likewise in the interior, were generally divided into foreign **(pardesi)** and local Muslims. The Arabs, Persians, Egyptians and Turks, coming from the Persian Gulf, Red Sea coasts, Egypt and Turkey, belonged to the former category. Many of them were forced to leave the ports of the west coast during the period of Portuguese activities. The local Muslims were largely converts and, no doubt, there were descendants of mixed marriages, too, in this category.

Along the Gujarat coast were the famed ports of Cambay, Surat, Rander, Diu, Gogha and Broach (the ancient Bharukachcha). All these ports and others west of Diu had considerable Muslim settlements, mainly from about the twelfth century. The most influential of the local Muslim trading communities of Gujarat was that referred to as Navayat Muslims, whose home was Rander on the right bank of the Tapti. In their heyday these Muslims traded extensively to Bengal and Southeast Asia, sailing in

very large ships.[14] They were also undoubtedly among the Gujarati Muslims trading in the East African coast before the arrival of the Portuguese.

Among the converts to Islam in Gujarat were the Khojas, who were an Ismaili **shia** sect, and the Bohras. The latter split into two groups in the sixteenth century. While the larger part consisted of peasants and belonged to the **sunni** sect, the smaller group was engaged in trade and was a section of the Ismaili **Shia** like the Khojas. Both Khojas and Bohras retained many elements of their Hindu past in legal and even religious matters.[15]

One of the strongest concentrations of Muslim traders was located on the Kerala (Malabar) coast. This was perhaps the most frequented coast of the peninsula by the traders from the Muslim countries. The old port of Cranganore as well as the new ports of Dhabol, Calicut and Quilon were very active in this trade.[16] According to Abder Razzak, Calicut in particular had a number of Muslim residents and, in Ludovico Varthema's estimate, there were 15,000 foreign Muslim traders in that city.[17] In 1502, when Vasco da Gama demanded that the Zamorin of Calicut expel from the city all Muslims from Cairo and the Red Sea, the latter refused, in the words of Barros, "to expel more than 4,000 households of them who live in Calicut as natives, not as strangers, and from whom his kingdom had received much profit."[18] As early as the ninth century, the Arabs had begun to use the South Indian ports as an advanced base for their China Trade.[19] The Arab vessels, on their way to China, went direct to Quilon from the Persian Gulf. From that port they rounded Sri Lanka and set sail from the Nicobar islands after taking on fresh provisions there. Then they went to the Malay coast and sailed on towards the Indonesian Islands. It was from here that some of them sailed to China.[20]

Kerala was, therefore, a vital link in the Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean. But Cola sea-power was a serious obstruction in the eleventh century to the growth of Muslim influence there. One of the first important measures taken by Cola Rajaraja I after ascending the throne towards the end of the tenth century was to secure the Kerala coast with a naval engagement off Kandalur-calai and to conquer the Laccadive and the Maldive Islands.

These actions were evidently intended to curb the growing Arab influence in the Indian Ocean trade. With the decline of the Colas in the twelfth century, Muslim influence increased tremendously on the Kerala coast. There were very powerful Muslim settlements in almost all the important

ports of that coast, but the most important one was at Calicut. The Muslims at this port were so powerful that the naval forces of the Zamorin were placed under their command and they also enjoyed a dominant role in the seaborne trade for some time.[21]

The most important Muslim community of Kerala were the Mappilas (Moplahs). They appear to have been originally descendants of Arab settlers, and the community grew through immigration, intermarriage and conversion.[22] Around 1,500, we learn from the Portuguese sources, the Mappilas were owners of large ships and were in control of the trade and navigation of Kerala. They were actively engaged in the trade with Sri Lanka and the Maldives and presumably went on long voyages to the ports of Southeast Asia, too. Among the Mappilas was a class of people called the Marakkars, a word meaning navigators of ships, who according to Mappila traditions were originally maritime traders of Cochin. Evidently they acquired this name on account of their skill as Seamen. When the Raja of Cochin began to favour the Portuguese, it is said, the Marakkars were in difficulties and left Cochin to settle in Ponnani, one of the ports belonging to the Zamorin of Calicut. They later became leaders of the Muslim resistance to the Portuguese. The Kunjalis, well known admirals of Calicut who served the Zamorin with courage and devotion, were from this class.[23]

The ports of Tamilnadu and Andhra, like those of Kerala, were also favourable for the settlement of Muslim traders after the fall of the Colas. An enlightened policy pursued by rulers in these regions towards foreign traders seems to have encouraged these settlements. The charters of the Kakatiya rulers of Andhra to overseas traders clearly indicate some of the special advantages enjoyed by foreigners.[24] Motupalli in Andhra and Kayal-pattinam in Tamilnadu were two principal ports with flourishing Muslim traders in the thirteenth century and later. The latter, popularly referred to as Kayal, was one of the chief ports for trade with Sri Lanka, and the Muslim traditions of this country trace the origin of many Muslim settlements here to traders from that port. Kayal has come in for prominent mention in our sources. An important agency had been established there by an Arab chief who is described by Muslim historians as Maliku-l-Islam Jamal-ud-din, ruler of Kis and later farmer-general of Fars.[25] The establishment of this agency seems to have been necessitated by the growth of the horse trade. According to Wassaf, as many as 10,000 horses were imported into Kayal and other ports, of which 1,400 were to be of Jamal-ud-din's own breed.[26] The most important item traded to India from the port of Hurmuz was indeed horses.[27] Marco Polo, that

'prince of medieval travellers,' visiting Kayal at the end of the thirteenth century, records:[28]

> *It is at this city that all the ships touch that come from the west, as from Hormos, and from Kis and from Aden, and all Arabia, laden with horses and with other things for sale.*

Kayal was probably an important link in the horse trade with Sri Lanka and the horses brought to the port of Uratturai (Kayts) in northern Sri Lanka in the twelfth century probably came from Kayal.[29] There is little doubt that Kayal had emerged after the fall of the Colas as the chief port in Tamilnadu for the Muslim trade and consequently it was dominated by Muslims who had a commercial network that covered the ports on the western coast of Sri Lanka, from Puttalam to Beruwala.

Their Role in the Indian Ocean Trade

The diverse Muslim communities of Peninsular India had a significant role to play in the Indian Ocean trade in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, until they were ousted by the European powers. By the end of the twelfth century the naval power of the Colas and the Sailendras had completely declined and the many South Indian mercantile communities who were once flourishing in Sri Lanka and the Southeast Asian countries had begun to give way to the Arabs. At this stage the Muslim trading communities of Peninsular India entered the scene and began to claim a major share of the coastal trade, the Indo-Sri Lanka trade as well as of the trans-oceanic trade. Soon they were able to secure a dominant role in the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean and an enviable share of the seaborne trade in Southeast Asia. In fact, by the end of the fifteenth century, the Arabs had lost their supreme position in the seaborne trade of South and Southeast Asia and it was the Indian Muslims who were in control of that trade.

In the thirteenth century when the bulk of the Indian Ocean trade passed into the hands of the Arabs, the Hindu and Jain traders from India were not completely ousted by them. While the dominant role was no doubt with the Arabs, the Indian traders had a subordinate role to play as intermediaries. Unlike in the period of the European powers, as is well known, there was no question of one commercial power enjoying a monopoly of the oceanic trade to the exclusion of all other trading communities. Indian traders continued to be engaged in the trans-oceanic trade and indeed continued to control the coastal trade of the peninsula. But they

did come increasingly under Arab influence. As M. N. Pearson has tried to explain, "the Arabs, as they erupted South and East in the early years of the **hijrah**, tended to convert mostly people who lived on the coasts and so were most accessible. This was certainly the case in Gujarat and Indonesia, and among such people would be a high proportion of the previously non-Muslim merchants."[29a] Thus, some of the old Hindu trading communities seem to have continued their trade as new Muslim groups and they no doubt worked in co-operation with the Arabs in a subordinate role. There were also non-mercantile communities among the new converts to Islam but they too seem to have been pushed into a position of dependence of the foreign Muslims and exploited by them. The following analysis by O. K. Nambiar of the role of the Indians converted to Islam in the port of Calicut is of interest in this respect.[30]

> *As regards Moslem population (of Calicut) we have to recognise two groups, local converts to Islam and the foreign Moslem settlers. A great part of the former belonged to the poorer classes of the local population. By putting themselves outside the Hindu fold, they were precluded from participation in their hereditary occupational arrangements of caste although they gained contractual freedom. . . . In course of time they were reduced to dependence on their Moslem progenitors for patronage and employment.*
>
> *Their religious ties and association with foreign Moslems gave them a new field of service in the mercantile towns. They took to trade in a variety of subsidiary roles - broker, jobber, retailer. The poorest contented themselves by serving as porters and packers . . . . . .*
>
> *. . . . . The role of the native Moslems used to be that of a middleman in the commercial transactions of Calicut. Being natives, they had affinities of race and tradition with the growers and manufacturers of Malabar. But as they were not possessed of any considerable capital, they were always at the mercy of the rich foreign merchants from whom many of them were, no doubt, obliged to borrow. Being at a disadvantage, they did not get a fair deal in the enormous volume of business transacted annually at Calicut. These native Moslems were the channels through which foreign goods were distributed either on barter or for money among the people.*

The foreign Moslems demanded too high a price for these objects of luxury to leave any but the most meagre profits for those engaged in their distribution. Besides, we learn, the foreign Moors in their pride of race, wealth and culture, had conducted themselves arrogantly towards the native Moplas.

This reduction to a subordinate status was probably true of many of the Peninsular Indian Muslim communities in the early stages. There were, however, others who enjoyed a better role and were among the most affluent on the Indian coasts. It is possible that such people were mainly from among the traditional trading communities who were converted to Islam. While the growing influence of Islam facilitated their rise, a new emphasis on caste prohibitions concerning travel by sea appears to have discouraged Hindus from continuing with maritime trade. Despite this prohibition, there were no doubt certain prominent Hindu trading communities, like the Vanias of Gujarat and the Chettis of Tamilnadu, who were profitably engaged in overseas trade. But their power and affluence were not comparable to those of the leading Muslim communities. The latter were the real successors to the Hindu mercantile communities of the Cola period from South India.

At first, when the Arabs were in control of the maritime trade of Asia, the role of the Peninsular Indian Muslims was largely confined to the coastal trade. This was no doubt linked to the oceanic trade. The Gujarati Muslims played an important part in this coastal trade, specially that of western India. From their great ports in the Gulf of Cambay, Gujarati traders took their famous cotton cloths, which in many places acquired the name of **kambaya**, to the ports of the western coast, chiefly Dhabol, Chaul, Goa, Cranganore and Calicut and to Sri Lanka. From the Kerala ports they took back pepper to the ports of the Deccan and to their own Gujarati ports. But the pepper trade from Kerala to the Red Sea was handled by the Arabs.

Similarly the Muslim communities of Kerala and Tamilnadu had a share of the coastal trade and of the trade with Sri Lanka and the Maldives but were not competing with the Arabs in the oceanic trade. As heirs to the South Indian mercantile communities that played a prominent role in the Southeast Asian trade earlier, these Tamil and Malayali traders presumably did not fully give up their voyages to the Malay Kingdoms and by the fifteenth century had gained much influence in Malacca and in some parts of the Indonesian islands.

The Arabs did not succeed in maintaining their supreme position in the Indian Ocean trade for ever. Soon the Gujaratis began to enjoy a share of

the overseas trade, too. Pearson gives a vivid description of this trade of Gujarat, which was almost exclusively handled by Gujarati Muslims:[31]

> *Gujarat's most important trade was that linking Aden and Malacca via her own great ports. . . . . Goods and money from Italy, Greece and Damascus were brought down the Red Sea by the merchants of Cairo and Jiddah to Aden. There they were either exchanged for goods brought to Aden in local Gujarati ships, or else the goods from west Asia and Europe continued on in Arab ships to Gujarat. These cargoes included gold and silver, quicksilver, vermilion, copper, rosewater, wools, and brocades. In the great ports of the Gulf of Cambay they were exchanged for local goods, pre-eminently cotton cloths, and imports, especially spices from Malacca. The trade between Gujarat and Malacca was handled almost entirely in Gujarati ships. European and Gujarati products were imported to the great Southeast Asian entrepot, and exchanged for Chinese goods, especially silks and porcelains, for rubies and lacre from Pegu, for Bengal and Coromandel cloths, and for the cloves, nutmeg, and mace of the Molucca and Banda Islands. The ships sailing this Gujarat – Malacca route were based on Gujarat, but the merchants were various. The majority were Gujarati, but there were many others from countries in west Asia.*
>
> *Apart from this blue-ribbon Aden to Malacca route, one inevitably found Gujaratis with their ubiquitous cloths in many other parts of seaborne Asia. They traded to points east of Aden in the Hadramaut, as far as Hurmuz. They went to Bengal, Pegu and Sumatra, as well as collecting from these places in Malacca. They virtually monopolized overseas trade in East Africa, collecting gold and ivory and slaves in exchange for their cloths, for the people of Sofala, like those of Melinde and Mombasa, "want nothing but the cloths of Cambay". . . .*
>
> *. . . . .the spices of Southeast Asia – mace, nutmeg, and cloves – were carried by Gujarati ships, though the merchants concerned were heterogeneous.*

Around the same time, Tamil Muslim traders were also playing an influential role in the trade with Southeast Asia, though perhaps not to the same

extent as the Gujaratis. Details of this are unfortunately not available, but it is clear from the evidence we have in the Malay annals regarding the affluence and political influence enjoyed by the Tamil Muslims in the kingdom of Malacca and in Java in the fifteenth century, that they had a significant share in the trade of the Malay world.[32] The solitary evidence of the Tamil inscription on a bell from a ship belonging to Muhaiyyadin Wakkusu (discovered in New Zealand) seems to suggest that some of the Tamil Muslim traders had even ventured beyond Java towards the Pacific.

In South Asia, Tamil and Malayali Muslim traders were virtually enjoying a monopoly of the Indo-Sri Lanka trade until the arrival of the Portuguese. The many settlements of the Tamil-speaking Muslims in the ports of the western and southern coasts, especially Puttalam, Kalpitiya, Colombo, Beruwala and Hambantota as well as in the interior market-towns, are an indication of the extent of their activities and commercial influence in the island.

By the fifteenth century, the Gujarati Muslims, and to a lesser extent the Tamil Muslims, had taken over from the Arabs the dominant role in the Indian Ocean trade. But the Muslim communities of Kerala, with the exception of the Mappilas, continued to play a subsidiary role. The Mappilas, on the other hand, appear to have gained an important position comparable to that of the foreign Muslims along certain trade routes, although long-distance trade was still largely in the hands of the latter.

Perhaps the most salient feature of the trade in the Indian Ocean towards the end of the fifteenth century is the remarkable role of the Gujarati Muslims. While our authorities are agreed that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries shipping in the Indian Ocean was dominated by Muslims, the dominant role of the Gujarati Muslims is not usually highlighted. Since schlolarly interest for a long time has been focussed on the East-West spice trade and since descriptions of Asian trade at the time of the arrival of the Protuguese were in the main concerned with this long-distance trade, it is the Arabs, Turks and the Egyptians who have been in the limelight. It is hard to disagree with Pearson that "The Euro-centric stress on trade to Europe ignores the vast bulk of Asian trade, that which was **not** bound for Europe. And in this inter-Asian trade it was the Gujaratis, not Arabs, who were dominant."[33] Pearson has convincingly shown that the most important merchants on all the Asian routes, except two, around 1,500 were Gujaratis, carrying their own Cambay cloths, indigo and opium, as well as the goods of others.[34]

Fortunately the Portuguese writers have left a considerable amount of incidental information relating to the Gujarati Muslim seafarers who were of much help to the Portuguese when the latter first came to the east, and who later submitted to Portuguese supremacy by being relatively law-abiding sailors. We have already seen in the passage quoted from Pearson how the Gujaratis were directly involved in the trade between India and Southeast Asia on the one side and that between India and East Africa on the other. They were also playing a role as intermediaries in the trade between Asia and Europe in which the main carriers were the Arabs. When the Portuguese first entered the Indian Ocean, the Gujarati Muslims were virtually in control of the trade in East Africa, as we have seen, and were among the first Asian communities to come into contact with the new European power. It is a well known fact that Vasco da Gama was guided by a Gujarati Muslim pilot from East Africa to Calicut on that historic voyage in 1498. The skill of the Gujarati Muslim pilots was well recognized by the Portuguese and the references are many in their writings. To quote Pires, "The Gujaratees were better seamen and did more navigating than the other people of these parts, and so they have larger ships and more men to man them. They have great pilots and do a great deal of navigation."[35] Another source endorses this view by saying that the Gujaratis knew the route to Southeast Asia "much better than all other nations because of the great commerce they have with those (eastern) countries."[36]

The available information shows that Indian ships around 1,500 were as a rule crewed by Muslims, mostly Gujarati Navayats and Kerala Mappilas. At this time both the political elite and the Hindu mercantile classes of western India employed Gujarati Muslim crews in their ships. The trade between Gujarat and Malacca, as we have already seen, was carried on almost entirely in Gujarati ships. Among the political elite who owned ships were some of the sultans of western India and the Deccan, especially the Sultan of Gujarat. The Vanias of Cambay were the most prominent Hindu traders of the western coast, but their ships' crews, as noted by Albuquerque, were all Muslims.[37] There is also the example of Malik Gopi, a major ship owner and trader belonging to the Nagar Brahmin caste who flourished early in the sixteenth century, employing Muslim seamen.[38] Even at the time the Portuguese were controlling the Indian Ocean and imposing restrictions on Indian shipping, when the Indian traders violated these restrictions, "the sea-going side of this attempt to defy Portuguese control was handled almost completely by Muslims".[39] In this manner, too, Gujarati and other Peninsular Indian Muslims were

playing an important role in the Indian Ocean trade as skilled seamen for the merchant princes of the western coast.

Indian shipping, by all accounts, had developed remarkably by the end of the fifteenth century. By European standards, fairly large ships were built by the Indians. The ships belonging to Muslim traders, it has been recorded, were between 375 and 800 tons capacity. Some of these were bigger than the Portuguese ships in the Indian Ocean, for even in 1525 the biggest of the Portuguese ships in India was only 550 tons and it was not until 1558 that they sent a ship of 1,000 tons to India.[40] Early in the sixteenth century the Sultan of Gujarat had a ship of 800 tons which was captured by the Portuguese in 1510. According to Castanheda, it was "the biggest ship that used to sail in the Gulf (of Cambay) and in many parts was famous for its size."[41] The Navayat Muslims of Rander are described as sailing large beautiful ships.[42] The Muslim communities of Peninsular India presumably had a contribution to make in the building of these large ships and the development of shipping in the Indian Ocean.

It was at this stage that the role of the Muslims was seriously affected by the intrusion of the Portuguese. Once again many of them were forced to play a subordinate role by submitting to the new European power, while others chose to defy it and suffer the consequences.

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III

MUSLIMS IN SRI LANKA IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

T. B. H. Abeyasinghe

Any serious writing on the Muslims of Sri Lanka in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has to take account of two constraints. First, while the Sinhalese have their **Mahavamsa,** the **Culavamsa** and the **Rajavaliya,** and the Tamils their **Yalpanavaipavamalai,** the Muslims have no chronicle of their own. They are a people without a historical tradition. Following from this is the second problem, that much of the information on the Muslims during this period has to be gleaned from the writings by the Portuguese, their deadly enemies.(1)

Muslims in Sri Lanka during these two centuries fall into two broad categories, though the use of the term "Mouros" in Portuguese documents of the period tends to blur any distinction between them.(2) The first group comprised those Muslims whose families had long been resident in the island and who therefore looked upon Sri Lanka as their homeland. In some Portuguese documents, particularly the **tombo** (compiled during 1613–1615), they are referred to as "Mouros naturais" or indigenous Moors. The second group comprised principally the merchants who traded between the Indian and Sri Lankan ports and the mariners who manned and worked the boats sailing between the two countries. This group visited the island year after year, coming in at the start of the sailing season and going away at its close or during the next. During each visit they spent a number of months in the island. In course of time, they set up business relations, acquired friends, property, and perhaps wives too and fathered children. This is the group referred to in Dutch and early British documents as "Coast Moors." In fact two of the names used by the Sinhalese to designate Moors **hambayo** and **marakkala** – prove that the Sinhalese

associated them with the sea, for **hambayo** is from **hamban** (i.e. **champana** a type of boat) and **marakkala** is a boatman or sailor.[3] Modern demographers would classify this group as temporary residents, but such a classification in the context of the 16th and 17th centuries would not help at all, for the trend throughout those centuries was for increasing numbers of this group to settle down in Sri Lanka, not, as one Portuguese document put it, "from monsoon to monsoon" but permanently. The process of settling down itself would be a long one, stretching perhaps over several generations. During this period the people concerned would maintain interests in both India and Sri Lanka, and would also have relatives in both countries. It is best to characterize them as people with dual domicile, but we should bear in mind that many were tending to regard Sri Lanka as their permanent home.[4]

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Muslim population of Sri Lanka was increasing as a result of the people of the second group electing permanent domicile in the island. Queiros' statement that the Moors "multiplied (in Ceylon) . . . . each year 500 or 600 staying on . . . ." refers to this process.[5] An instance recorded in a document from the last decade of the 17th century illustrates the process of domiciliation of Moors at work in Sri Lanka. A Moor from Kilacare in South India – Sulaiman by name wished to settle down in Puttalam, then under the king of Kandy. He sought to send out a boat – load of arecanut of South India for purchase of goods to be offered as tribute to the king.[6] With the payment of tribute Sulaiman's right of domicile within Kandyan territories would be deemed to be recognized.

A second instance recorded in the Portuguese land – register **(tombo)** of 1613–1615 may also illustrate the process. According to the Sinhala documents produced before the Portuguese officials by the officers of the port of Alutgama (in present-day Western Province), "the Moor inhabitants of the said port as **tupetim** each year to Raju [i.e. Rajasinghe of Sitawaka] 60 **larins**. . . ., depending on the sustenance – land each one was having and this custom of **tupetim** is paid for possesing some gardens and from their persons for living in the said port and for conducting their buying and selling transactions. . . . ."[7]

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, substantial settlements of Muslims existed on the western seaboard, particularly at Puttalam, Chilaw, Madampe, Negombo, Colombo, Kalutara, Beruwela, Maggona, Payagala, Alutgama, Bentota, Galle, Weligama, and Matara, according to the detailed evidence furnished in the Portuguese **tombo.**[8] At the port-towns of

Chilaw, Negombo, and Kalutara, the Moor communities had their own headmen in 1614, while at Alutgama the community was strong enough and influential enough to have three headmen.[9] At Negombo and Weligama, they had their own streets, **Rua dos Mouros** of the **tombo** – while those of Matara seem to have lived mainly in the bazaar area. At Colombo there was a Moorish quarter and the present day New Moor Street and Old Moor Street hark back to times when the residents along these streets were predominantly Muslims. Indeed, it is not unlikely that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Colombo was predominantly a Moorish city, with at least one mosque.[10]

Evidence of a comparable nature is not available for other areas of Sri Lanka, though it is known that Panagamuwa in the Madure **Korale** had some Muslims residents while in the town of Kandy also there was a substantial Muslim population. Traditional Muslim settlements like those of Hingula, Mawanella and Gampola also may date back to this period. In Jaffna, the province of Valikamam had a Muslim population, as did the island of Mannar.[11]

The Muslims engaged themselves in a wide variety of occupations. At the highest rung of the ladder was the Moor who in 1614 was a Vannia, the ruler of one of the many semi-independent territories lying between Puttalam and Mullaitivu, and who contracted with the Portuguese to deliver to them every year seven elephants "on account of villages which he owned free (of tax).[12] Though there are other instances of Moors serving in administrative posts such as headmen and **kanakapulles** (supervisors), the overwhelming majority of Moors in Sri Lanka appear to have been traders and seamen. This was specifically so in the case of Moors who lived in port-towns on the western sea-board of the island.

At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, the entire carrying trade of the island with India seems to have been handled by the Moors – "By these Moors principally are the products of that island funnelled, from which derive great profit" says Queiros. (**Por estes Mouros, principalmente, se trasfegauao as substancias dequela Ilha, de que cobrauao grandes interesses**)[13] **Champanas,** owned and operated by Moors, took away areca, spices, and occasionally even elephants to the Indian ports and brought back cotton and linen piece goods, rice, dride fish and small quantities of opium to the island. Just as the capital investment on these boats was that of Muslim merchants, the labour and technical skills to operate them also came from Moorish seafaring men. They had acquired a reputa-

tion for seamanship sailing the narrow seas between India and Sri Lanka[14] that even the Portuguese had to employ them on their ships, much against their wishes and policies. The Portuguese left this trade largely untouched in the hands of the Moors, making only one change – they forbade the export of spices. Thus under the Portuguese we hear of "Mouro **chatins,**" **chetty** being a word frequently employed by the European writers of the day to designate traders.[15]

Moors from South India also seem to have played an important role in the exploitation of the pearl-banks in the gulf of Mannar. The **Rajavaliya** refers to a **yona** (one of the names given in Sinhalese literary works to the Muslims), named Kadirayana from Kayalpattanam in India, who raided the pearl-banks and against whom Taniyavallabahu and Sakalakalavalla, the local ruler of Madampe and Udugampola, fought successfully.[16]

The internal trade of the island was also in the hands of the Moors. This trade was largely a peddling trade – it was then certainly no sedentary occupation. Individuals or groups of itinerant vendors, their wares on the backs of pack-animals, visited the villages, market-towns or market places in the interior and sold their merchandise – or more often exchanged them for local produce. The staples of this trade were cotton or calico cloth which the Moors took to the interior and bartered for areca, produced in practically every highland plot in the wet zone of Sri Lanka. The price paid for an **amuna** of areca, consisting of 26,000 nuts, was one **kachchi** or bale of cloth, 30–40 yards in length. The value in money-terms of an **amuna** of areca was four **larins.**[17] The formula of one **amuna** of areca = one **kachchi** of cloth = four **larins** seems to have been valid for 1½ centuries and was the basis on which business was transacted. Other goods taken into the interior were salt, salted or dried fish, opium and curios. Goods taken back to the coastal towns included betel, rice both husked and unhusked, spices and bees' wax, apart of course from areca.[18]

Itinerant trading required the maintenance of pack-animals. Bullocks were the favourite pack-animals, though the use of elephants was not unknown. Muslims kept teams of pack-bullocks. According to the Portuguese **tombo,** for example, twelve Moors from Panagamuwa in Madure **Korale** kept 65 pack-bullocks. From the information gathered by John D'Oyly in the Kandyan kingdom of the early years of the 19th century, it is clear that the Moors of Hingula also kept pack-bullocks.[19] Moors who kept pack-animals were called upon to perform the **madiage rajakariya,** that is the transport of produce largely areca and grain on behalf of the king.

Muslims living in the port-towns of the west coast of the island held parcels of land, with coconut palms and a dwelling house in each plot. Thus at Tinipitiya near Madampe (in the present day NWP) eight Moors held eight garden plots in which there were 750 coconut palms. At Beruwala 38 Moors held 38 gardens with 2225 palms.[20] The Portuguese **tombo** nowhere gives the extents of the highland allotments, but from the number of coconut palms given (at the rate of 75 palms to the acre) it can be concluded that each plot of land was slightly over an acre in extent. There is no indication that the Moors living in coastal towns held any paddy land, but some of those living in the interior undoubtedly did. To the coastal Moor, the produce from the palms must have been a useful addition to the family kitty as well as the kitchen.

Other occupations taken by the Moors, according to Portuguese records, were tailoring and carpentry.[21]

As mentioned earlier, at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in the island there was a mosque in Colombo. It must have been for the use of the Moorish community, for there is no indication of any Islamic proselytizing activity in the island. Queiros specifically states that the Moors did not attempt conversion.[22] The great wave of Muslim missionary activity, which engulfed the Maldives in the twelth century and Malaysia and Indonesia from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, passed by Sri Lanka, leaving it untouched.

We next consider the question: how did the arrival of the Portuguese early in the sixteenth century and their subsequent acquisition of political control affect the Muslims.[23]

The arrival of the Portuguese in the island in 1505 set off a wave of panic among the Muslims, particularly those in Colombo. The hostility of the "Feringhese" towards the Muslims and the cruelty with which the first Portuguese treated the Muslims must have been common knowledge[24] in trading circles and rumour and distance probably exaggerated them manyfold. The arrival of the Portuguese therefore threatened to set off an exodus of Muslims to India, particularly of those with dual domicile. Such an event, however, was contrary to Portuguese interests as they had yet to get a permanent foothold in the island. Dom Lourenco de Almeida, the captain of the first squadron to visit the island, therefore personally reassured the Muslims of the friendly intentions of the Portuguese.[25]

The period of friendship and co-operation thus inaugurated between the Portuguese and the Muslims lasted till 1518, though there were occasional

conflicts between the two parties. From the Portuguese point of view, it was not an appropriate time for taking on added burdens, as they had their hands full. From 1507–09, they were engaged in beating back the serious naval threat that the combined fleets of the Zamorin of Calicut and the Sultan of Egypt posed to their power in the Indian Ocean. As soon as this danger receded, Afonso de Albuqurque inaugurated the policy of establishing bases in Hormuz, Socotra, Goa and Malacca. It was the period during which the basic apparatus for the Portuguese control over the Indian Ocean was set up. Portuguese connections with Sri Lanka were therefore minimal: in Colombo they had a factory or store-house, in charge of a factor and a few ships visited Colombo each year, bringing in provisions, stores and ammunition and taking away cinnamon. By 1517 the Portuguese were well-established in the East and it was time to think of more permanent arrangements for Sri Lanka, something more than the tenuous connection provided by a factory and an annual fleet. In that year Lopo Soares the Albergaria, the Portuguese governor at Goa, visited the island with a fleet of ships and next year, completed a fort in Colombo.[26]

The construction of the fort was something unprecedented in Sri Lanka's history. Never before had traders fortified themselves behind walls of lime and stone. It was a challenge to the kings of Kotte, whose writ obviously stopped short at the fort-gates. The fort also was a threat to the Muslim traders. The king of Kotte, aided by the Moors and the Zamorin of Calicut, harassed the Portuguese fort until they decided in 1524 to demolish it.[27] Princes and merchants had combined to defeat the foreigner asserting extra territorial rights.

The palace revolution known as the "Vijayabakollaya" (1521) and the conflict among the kingdoms born from that event altered the balance of power in favour of the foreigner.[28] Bhuvanekabahu of Kotte (reigned 1521–1551), unable to withstand the forces of Sitawaka, the kingdom ruled by his younger brother, Mayadunne (reigned 1521–1580), called upon the Portuguese to reinforce his defences. Gradually the role of the Portuguese forces in the defence of Kotte grew and Bhuvanekabahu had to trim some of his policies to suit the interests of his protectors. At their bidding, he ordered the Muslim population to leave Colombo.[29]

Bhuvanekabahu's expulsion order covered the Muslims of Colombo only. In any case, the growing power and influence of the Portuguese within the Kotte kingdom and the fact that Colombo was their headquarters must

have made that a hot seat for the Muslims. Muslims displaced by the royal decree probably relocated themselves in other port-towns on the western coast such as Beruwala, Alutgama and Negombo, some of which were under the control of Sitawaka. That this was what happened is clear from Queiros, who says that the expelled Moors were received by Mayadunne in his court.[30] The Moors therefore only transferred their residences, places of business and their allegiance.

The anti-Muslim policies of the Portuguese underwent a radical change in the 1560s. During a visit to the island, Dom Antão de Noronha (viceroy 1564–68) conceded several rights and privileges to the Muslim community.[31] The nature of these privileges is nowhere stated, but the right of residence and the right to trade unhampered must have been their essence.

The reasons for the reversal by D. Antao de Noronha of previous policies towards the Muslims cannot also be stated with certainty. The 1560s saw the power of the kingdom of Sitawaka at its peak, with the youthful Rajasinha honing his military skills against Portuguese arms. For five long years from 1560, his armies virtually maintained a state of siege on the Portuguese and their protege, Dharmapala, the figure-head king of Kotte (1551–1597), forcing them even to abandon the capital city of Kotte in 1565 and concentrate their forces in Colombo.[32] There are some indications that during these difficult times, some leading Muslims rallied round the Portuguese and even organized companies of soldiers to fight alongside them.[33] Obviously the Muslims, who have the knack of hitching their wagon to a rising star, had realized that co-operation with the Portuguese was more fruitful than opposition and had thrown in their lot with them. The privileges which they were then granted and which they were to enjoy for some 60 years, were their reward.

A re-examination of the Portuguese polices towards the Muslims began in the second decade of the seventeenth century. What triggered off this re-examination, it is not possible to say, but that the Spanish connection played a vital role seems very likely. In 1597, on the death of Dharmapala, the Portuguese took possession of the kingdom of Kotte. Portugal itself, in 1580, had come under the crown of Spain. And in Spain, anti-Moorish sentiments had a long and bloody history. For over a century since the conquest of the Moorish kingdom of Granada in 1492, the Spanish royal house adopted increasingly harsh policies against the Moors and Moriscoes–Moors who had adopted Christianity and these policies were to end finally in their expulsion from Spanish soil. First to go was their freedom of conscience. In 1567, Philip II promulgated decrees forbidding Moo-

rish customs and the use of Arabic. The battle of Lepanto in 1571, in which the Spanish fleet secured a victory over the Turks, was widely and popularly interpreted as indicating divine approval of Spanish policies against the Moors. Though government policy in the early days had been to encourage the Moors to embrace Christianity, from about 1568, this policy was regarded as a failure and the Moors who adopted Christianity were widely regarded as insincere converts. The defeat of the Spanish armada in 1588 at the hands of the English was popularly regarded as due to divine displeasure at allowing the Moriscoes to remain in the country. In 1609 a policy of expulsion was launched and completed during the next five years. In theory at least, Spanish soil was rid of Moors and Moriscoes.(34) The anti-Moorish policies followed by the Portuguese in Sri Lanka seem to flow directly from those the Spaniards followed in Spain.

To speak of the Spanish connection is not to be regarded as saying that the Portuguese had a cleaner record on this question. As pointed out earlier, right from the start the Portuguese launched policies calculated to strike terror into the Muslims and Portuguese officials serving in Sri Lanka were only too happy to distinguish themselves by their anti-Muslim acts, if conditions were favourable.

Other factors arising from the local political, religious or demographic situation made the Portuguese adopt anti-Muslim policies. The very presence of the Moors in the island was regarded as detrimental to its peace and quiet, while their trade with Kandy was regarded as strengthening that kingdom and making it difficult for the Portuguese to subdue it. The increase of the Muslim population in the island, reportedly at the rate of about 500–600 annually, created fears in some quarters. In November 1619, for instance, the bishop of Cochin reported that having "so many Moors, enemies of the name of Christ" was prejudicial to the interests of the Portuguese government.(35)

Another factor stirring local sentiment against the Muslims was that they had become a privileged and influential minority, as a result of the concessions granted by Dom Antao de Noronha. They had money and money bought them influence and friends in high places. Practically every Portuguese in Sri Lanka held land, and land produced arecanuts. Areca crops were sold to Muslim merchants, and as happens in our day too, advance payments on the pledge of the next crop must have been quite common. Such practices must have put every Portuguese under obligatoin to the Muslim merchants. A further factor was that while the Buddhist population had no religious freedom, the Muslims seem to have

enjoyed some measure of it.[36] The religious freedom enjoyed by them was widely regarded as stiffening the resistance of the Buddhist population to Catholic missionary activities. Such privileges also made them at once an object to be envied and emulated, if the stories given by Queiros are to be believed.[37] Catholic priests felt keenly the inequity of the situation where the decrees of the Synod of Diamper and the Ecclesiastical councils of Goa were so blatantly ignored. They were influential and they probably made representations to Lisbon and Madrid, at a time when the Moorish question was uppermost in these capitals.

European as well as local development thus tended to give a handle to men who believed in the need for a hard-line against the Muslims. The first shot in the campaign was fired off by the count of Vidigueira (viceroy 1597–1600) who ordered the expulsion of the Muslims from Sri Lanka.[38] Vidigueira's order seems to have been a trial ballon and no attempt was made in Colombo to implement the order, nor did Goa follow up this order with the inevitable reminders.

The second step in the campaign against the Moors was the issue of a decree dated 22 April 1613 by Dom Jeronimo de Azevedo, who was viceroy in Goa from 1612 to 1617. By this decree no Moor was allowed to reside in Colombo except "from monsoon to monsoon." Certain categories of Moors were exempt from the operation of the decree –"native Moors and residents of the same city from the time of Raju" (i.e. Rajasinghe of Sitawaka). The decree was to the proclaimed in the town-squares and other public places by the town-crier and was to take effect one month from the date of such proclamation. Any Moor violating the prohibition was to be apprehended and condemned to the galleys, which was the usual punishment in such cases.[39]

In retrospect, Azevedo's decree seems the mildest and the most sensible among the anti-Muslim legislation of this period. Its operation covered only the city of Colombo. It seems to have been aimed at preventing the Moors with dual domicile from selecting Colombo as their permanent home. Native Moors and those with long residence were exempted from the application of the decree.

Two years after Azevedo's decree, in February 1615, the king issued an alvara (decree) of his own. After outlining in a preamble the religious and political objections to the presence of the Moors in the island, he proceeded "of his royal and absolute power" to withdraw the privileges that

had been accorded by D. Antao de Noronha. The king also stated that D. Antao's grant did not constitute a binding contract, but was only an exercise of viceregal grace and favour and for that reason revocable. Unlike Azevedo, the king ordered a total prohibition of the "Moors being admitted to live in the island" (. . . **na dita ilha nao seja admetido a morar mouro algum**"). Those already living were to be expelled. Further provisions in the decree prohibited Moors buying native boys, or taking them for debts or taking them across to India. The king went to state that some royal officials might, out of their personal interest be inclined to favour the Moors in implementing this decree, and warned that such officials had to be dealt with severely. The king went on to state clearly that he disagreed with Azevedo's decree of 1613 because it fell short of what he himself had in mind.[40]

The king's decree was a draconian measure. Conceived in Europe, it took account neither of economic nor political realities in Sri Lanka nor of considerations of natural justice. The decree was unenforceable and for a decade, no one made the slightest effort to enforce it, though the king did not fail in subsequent years to remind the viceroys in Goa of the need to implement it. In November 1619, the bishop of Cochin drew pointed attention to the decree being yet to be implemented.[41]

Five years after the issue of the royal decree, Goa responded, in a reply dated 11 February 1620, drawn up by Fernao de Albuquerque (acting Governor 1619–1622). He in effect said that the royal order was misconceived and based on misinformation. Speaking from personal experience in Sri Lanka, where he had been captain of Colombo, he explained that Moors were "not prejudicial to Portuguese interests in the island; on the contrary they are of great benefit to its commerce, for they are all traders and factors in the vessels which go to the other coast and come from there and through them is maintained the trade in goods and foodstuffs taken to that island", and that "if they cease coming, the trade will also cease. They are men who do not use arms nor do they trade in war materials, but deal only with merchandise and buying and selling, from which accrues much benefit to the residents of Colombo . . . ." (Os mouros nao sao prejudiciaes naquela Ilha antes de multa utilidade ao comercio della, por que sao todos mercadores e feitores das embarcacoes que vao e vem da outra costa, e com elles se faz o comercio das fazendas e mantimentos que se levao aquella ilha. . . . que se faltarem faltara a administracao doste (sic) comercio, e sao homens que nao usao armas nem tratos de cousa de guerra, e so da mercancia e de compras e venda de que resulta geral beneficio aos moradores de Colombo. . . . . "). He also pointed out that in recent wars, no Moor had joined the enemy.[42]

In December 1622, Lisbon responded to Fernao de Albuquerque's letter, with a greatly modified and more realistic policy. It was a partial retreat from the no-compromise position enunciated in the decree of February 1615. On all essential points, Lisbon's new line was the same as that Azevedo had laid down in 1613. What prompted the home government to modify its policy other than Albuquerque's brief rejoinder of 1620, it is not possible to say in the absence of the minutes of the councils which formulate policies in Lisbon.

The royal letter of 22 December 1622[43] embodying the new line recapitulates as the decree of February 1615 did the reasons why the presence of the Muslims in the island was considered unhealthy. Then it goes on to insist that the prohibition order of 1615 must be enforced notwithstanding any rejoinder or protest by the local officials. Then it proceeds to lay down substantial modifications and exemptions. In the first place, Goa was given the discretion to enforce the royal orders in full or in part. Goa was also advised to implement the orders in such manner that it may "not be the means of further disturbing the affairs of Ceylon" **(não seja meyo de se alterarem mais as cousas de ceilao).**[44] Together, the two reservations gave Goa sufficient leeway to modify the royal policy or to postpone its implementation and Goa, under the aged and infirm Conde de Vidigueira, (second term as viceroy 1622–1628) was sure to pass on the discretionary powers to Colombo.

The royal letter exempted two groups of Moors from the operation of the policy 1. those who served in the vessels trading with India and 2. the descendants of Moors who had lived in Colombo from the earliest times and those who during the sieges laid to Colombo by hostile kings had formed themselves into fighting units and fought alongside the Portuguese. The first group, though allowed into the island as a mater of necessity, was to be under close surveillance: individuals of that group were not allowed outside the port from which they entered the island and were permitted to stay on until the next sailing season only; their entry was to be only through four named ports and at each port, registers were to be carefully maintained of their movements.

Exemptions from the royal policy on Moors, it is clear from this description, were granted only on two principles – the need to prevent economic dislocation from possible break-down of trade with India and the need to reward past loyalties. Azevedo had exempted all **"Imouros naturais"** from the operation of his policy; the king extended concessions only to the Colombo Moors.

The royal orders had given a great deal of discretionary power to Goa sufficient in fact to scuttle it or postpone its implementation. But the captain-general in Sri Lanka at the time, Constantino de Sa de Noronha, was a hard-liner and the royal orders must have been in tune with his own wishes. In 1626 he implemented the decree and expelled the Muslims from the territories then under the control of the Portuguese, making an exception only of the native Muslims who it was reported, were very few in number.[45] There is no indication that the captain-general carried out the rest of the royal instructions and designated the four ports into which alone Moorish seamen were allowed to enter. Nor do we know the number of Muslims that Constantino de Sa expelled,[46] though it is certain that those expelled either went back to India or, what is more likely, fled to the kingdom of Kandy, which alone was not under the authority of the Portuguese at that time.

After the heat of the expulsion order had died down, it seems certain that many Muslims unobtrusively made their way back to the Portuguese territories. There are references to groups of Muslims in Alutgama and Kalutara after 1626. By 1642, the groups in Matara numbered 200–300, and was strong enough to seek Dutch assistance against the Portuguese.[47] Many Moors also seem to have avoided expulsion simply by arguing that they were indigenous or staying away from homes when the officials came to round them up. With their influence (which even the king of Portugal acknowledged) and friends in official circles, avoidance of expulsion was not difficult. Some of those who suffered the indignity of expulsion probably came back within a few years, and no 17th century government had the machinery to prevent that.

During the 150 years of their presence in the island, it can be seen in retrospect that the Portuguese followed no consistent policy towards the Muslims. Officials attitude towards the Muslim community veered wildly from frigid toleration to enthusiastic co-operation and even to conferment of rights which made that community more privileged than the native Sinhalese. Such inconsistencies are partly attributable to the predilections of individuals. Lopo Soares de Albergaria and Constantino de Sa de Noronha adopted anti-Muslim stances while Dom Antao de Moronha and Fernao de Albugurque took what can only be described as a strong pro-Muslim line. But to attribute all changes solely to individuals would be to miss the point. These changes have rather to be set down to a basic ambivalence in the position of the Muslims under conditions of an empire such as that of the Portuguese.

The Muslims were basically a peaceable trading community with strong religious convictions. In their peaceable disposition, they were quite unlike the Sinhalese. As traders, they were also a useful complement to the Sinhalese, the majority of whom tilled the soil. While thus their disposition and occupation made them welcome as residents, it was quite the contrary with their religion. In Sri Lanka, the Portuguese found the Jaffna man easiest to convert to the Catholic religion, the Sinhalese as a whole less easy but still manageable, while the Muslims never converted to the Catholic religion. The followers of the two monotheisms it appeared, never compromised. In the eyes of the Catholic clergy "the religious obstinacy" of the Muslims became a ready to hand device to beat them with, evoking animosities generated by centuries of Iberian history. To the Portuguese government, therefore, the Muslims were at once desirable and evil.

There were other factors as well, evoking similar contradictory feelings. As traders, the Muslims performed a useful - even vital - function, in the economy of the Portuguese territories, importing merchandise from India, distributing these in the low-country villages, collecting the village produce and taking it to the port-towns and to South India. So far so good. But what guarantee was there that they did not engage themselves in a bit of contraband trade on the side since under the Portuguese prohibited goods included all kinds of spices and even slaves. Supervision was difficult and the crafts plying between India and Sri Lanka were many. More important, the Muslims also traded with Kandy. Their role in the Kandyan economy was as vital to that kingdom as was their contribution to the economy of the low country. Their trade with Kandy, the Portuguese believed, enabled that kingdom to resist the Portuguese successfully. This was why Portuguese officials who believed that the reduction of the Kandyan kingdom to obedience ought to take precedence over other things adopted a strong anti-Muslim line. It is thus seen that the Muslims could not have evoked a simple yes/no response among the Portuguese authorities. Their responses were more likely to have been "yes", but" – or even "no, but'. . . "

The attitude of the Sinhalese kingdoms to the Muslims can be dealt with briefly. The Sinhalese kings found in their peaceable disposition and trading occupations excellent reasons to welcome them into territories. Even where the immigrants practised agriculture, unoccupied land was available plentifully. Muslims did not compete with peasants, but complemented the needs of a peasant society. To the Buddhist rules, their religion was no bar. Thus Mayadunne in the 16th century and Senerat in the seventeenth century welcomed them into their territories when the Portuguese no longer wanted them in their territories.

FOOTNOTES

1. Thus Fernão de Queiros., the chronicler **par excellence** of the 16th and 17th century history of Sri Lanka, calls the Moors "the enemies of the human race" on no fewer than three occasions. See his **Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon,** translated into English by Rev. Fr. S. G. Perera S.J. (Colombo 1930) pp. 530, 1128, 1143. Other writers were equally harsh on the Moors.

2. The term **"Mouros"** in Portuguese documents is really a blanket term: it was applied to the Moors in Spain, the people of North Africa and the Barbary coast, the Mughals, any Muslims in India and rarely even to the Turks.

3. In Charles Carter's **Sinhalese – English Dictionary** one of the definitions of හම්බන්කාරයා is coast moorman. In the **Sumangala Sabdakoshaya** by Ven. Soratha, මරක්කල is defined, among other things, as a sailor or boatman.

4. Until about Sri Lanka's independence, many Muslims in Sri Lanka continued to have close connections with their relations in India, travelling there regularly. Post-independence changes have made many of them choose between the two countries. Sinhalese travellers to South India are even now startled to be spoken to in Sinhala in shops in Madras or Bangalore, often by Muslims who had spent many years in Sri Lanka.

5. Fr. S. G. Perera translated the sentence which runs "multiplicarão. . . ficando cada ano 500 ou 600" as follows, "they multiplied. . . for there came 500 to 600 each year." **op. cit.** p. 742. The translation I have given is closer to the Portuguese. See p. 605 of the Portuguese text published by the Government Printer (Colombo 1916).

6. Sri Lanka National Archives (S.L.N.A.) Collection 1/codex 3257. This is a Dutch translation of a Sinhalese letter from the Kandyan chiefs to the Dutch Governor in Colombo, delivered to him on 12 March 1690. The Dutch translation speaks of the Moor wishing "schenkagie te presenteeren" "Schenkagie", usually meaning gifts, was the Dutch equivalent given in the documents of the period for the Sinhalese word පඩුරු පාක්කුඩම් Tribute, rather than gifts, is nearer the Sinhalese word and I have adopted it here.

7. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino Lisbon (AHU) codex 280. see under Allicao. Tupetim is **tuppotti panam,** a type of tax paid to the king by communities engaged in trade, or weaving or those living in the sea-ports.

8. See AHU codex 280, under entries for the respective towns. Queiros, **op. cit.** pp. 177, 189, 426, 743, 864-865.

9. AHU codex 280, see under each port-town.

10. Ibid.
Queiros, **op. cit.** pp. 177. 189, 193, 203, 204.

11. AHU codex 221, see the last entry under Maduru **Korale.** AHU codex 220 (This is the dues – register of Jaffna). See under the Rendos of Beligao (i.e. Valikaman) and Mannar. Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 60.
D'Oyly, **A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom (Dehiwala 1975) p. 26.**

12. AHU Codex 221, See under Puttalam.

13. Queiros, Portuguese text p. 140.

14. Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 745.

15. AHU codex 280, see under Puttalam. Yala and Burnell, **Hobson – Jobson, a Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases** (London 1903) see under Chetty.

16. **Rajavaliya** edited by A. V. Suraweera, (Colombo 1976) p. 212.

17. AHU Codex 222 f. 171, Codex 484 f. 4a.

18. AHU Codex 280. See under Kalutara.

19. AHU codex 221. See the last entry under Madure **Korale.** J.D.' Oyly, **op. cit.** p. 26.

20. AHU codex 280. See under Madampe and Beruwela.

21. AHU Codex 280. See under Negombo. Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 743.

22. Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 193.

23. In writing the rest of this paper, my task has been made easier by Dr. C. R. de Silva's article "Portuguese Policy towards the Muslims in Ceylon, 1505–1626" in the **Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies,** vol. 9, no. 2, July–December 1966, pp. 113–119. I express my acknowledgements to the author.

24. K. M. Panikkar, **Asia and Western Dominance** (London 1959) p. 35.

25. Queiros, **op. cit.** pp. 178–179.

26. Queiros, **op. cit.** pp. 188–196.

27. Ibid pp. 196–206.

28. On these events, see Tikiri Abeyasinghe, **Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594–1612** (Colombo 1966) pp. 9–11. C. R. de Silva, **The Portuguese in Ceylon 1617–1638** (Colombo 1972) p. 3.

29. Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 210.

30. Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 210.

31. **Documentos Remetidos da India ou Livros das Mon'Coes,** (Doc. Rem) Tomo III (Lisboa 1885) p. 258 **Archivo Portuguez Oriental,** edited by J. H. Cunha Rivera (APO) Vol. VI, (Nova Goa 1877) p. 1079.

32. Queiros, **op. cit.** pp. 396–421.

33. The royal letter dated 10 December 1622 says "at that time they [Muslims] were trusted so greatly that my captains formed companies of them in times of sieges and this is the reason why. . . . they were conferred privileges and favours. . . ." Doc. Rem. tomo VIII (Lisboa 1977) pp. 321–322. The sieges referred to may be those by Rajasingha in 1579–81, but as there is no evidence that Muslims were granted any privileges at that time, we have to conclude that the sieges were those of the 1560s.

34. R. Trevor Davies, **The Golden Century of Spain 1501–1621** (London 1964), pp. 12, 164, 166, 167, 248–250.

35. Doc. Rem. Vol. VIII (Lisboa 1977) p. 56.

36. See the instances given in Queiros, **op. cit.** pp. 743–44.

37. Ibid

38. C. R. de Silva, **op. cit.** p. 115.

39. Goa Historical Archives, Codex 471 (Cartas, Patentes e Alveras, Tomo III) ff. 93–94.
Note that the Portuguese quotation given by Dr. C. R. de Silva (CJHSS vol. IX no. 2, p. 116) has to be amended to read . . . " ". . . nenhum mouro sefa morador na cidade de Colombo, nem possa estar nella mais que de mon cao a moncao excepto. . . ."

40. A.P.O. VI pp. 1079–1080
Doc. Rem. III pp. 258–259.

41. Doc. Rem. III p. 393; IV p. 139, VIII p. 132.

42. Doc. Rem. V. P. 282.

43. Doc. Rem. Tomo VIII pp. 321–322
British Library, Additional Manuscripts, 20, 869, ff. 110–111.

44. Ibid. The Portuguese word **alterar** has a wider range of meanings than the English word which seems its equivalent. It can mean inflame, agitate.

45. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo in Lisbon (ANTT) Documentos Remetidos da India Livro 24 doc. 23 Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 745.

46. Dr. C. R. de Silva states (**op. cit.** p. 119) that at least 4000 of the displaced Moors fled to Kandy and were settled around Batticaloa. This seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the sources: Goa wrote to Lisbon (ANTT Doc. Rem Livro 24 doc. 23 ". . . . nas terras obedecida nao ha nenhus nellas,. . . . E porem que em Candea E Batecalon ha mais de quatro mil fora os de Cutiar. . ." This statement simply says that in Kandy and Batticaloa there are over 4000 Moors and the number does **not** refer to displaced persons. Both Rodriquez de Sa y Meneses and Queiros (who followed the former closely in regard to this question) state clearly that the number expelled is not known. Queiros, **op. cit.** p. 745. **Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society** vol. XI pp. 543, 545, Both writers then go on to state that king of Kandy placed 4000 in Batticaloa. This seems to be misunderstanding of what is in the Goa letter. It is safe to conclude that the number of displaced persons is not known.

47. Queiros, **op. cit.** pp. 864–865, 896.

IV

MUSLIM TRADERS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY AND THE PORTUGUESE IMPACT*

C. R. de Silva

The role of Muslim traders in Asia is a complex and fascinating subject on which a large volume of source material is available but comparatively few studies completed.(1) In fact, one of the possible areas of study that could become the focus of attention as a result of this Conference could well be the role of Muslim traders throughout Asia – as catalysts of economic change, as transmitters of the words of the Prophet, as intermediaries fostering cultural exchange and as agents of diffusion of technical know-how.

The present paper, however, has a much more limited purpose. It seeks to examine the role of Muslim traders in Indian Ocean commerce during the sixteenth century. As will be reviewed in detail later, the beginning of this period saw the followers of Islam in a dominant position in Indian Ocean trade. The century began with a ruthless attack on them by the Portuguese – an attack to which the Muslims responded with a mixture of armed force and accommodation until a fragile balance of power was reached by the mid-sixteenth century. This balance of power was threatened from time to time by the use of armed force by both the Portuguese and by various Islamic powers but on the whole it prevailed till intervention of other European powers notably the Dutch and the English in the early seventeenth century.

The sixteenth century seems a convenient point to begin our study partly because Portuguese sources, inadequate though they are, still provide a coherent picture of Muslim trade before it became seriously eroded by Western competition and partly because a study of developments during

the century provides some insights into the causes of the eventual decline of Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean.

It is perhaps best to clarify at the outset the use of the word 'dominant' as applied to Muslim traders in the Indian Ocean. When historians talk of the dominance of the Portuguese, the Dutch or the English over trade in this region they refer to a degree of control over trade exercised by each of these groups operating through a single trading organization directed from a central point and backed by armed power. Islamic dominance of trade in the Indian Ocean was of a very different sort. It was based on the commercial success of numerous individual Muslim merchants or of groups of Muslim merchants. Although adherence to a common faith sometimes enabled the building of commercial links and networks and evolution of mechanism of credit, Muslim merchants often competed fiercely with each other. Nevertheless, while Muslim rulers did go to war with one another over trade and related matters, the use of coercion and force was not a major factor in the success of Muslim trading groups. Thus Islamic 'dominance' of Indian Ocean commerce was radically different in nature to the dominance of Western powers who succeeded the Muslims.

This picture is well-illustrated by the examination of trade and traders in the eastern extremity of the Indian Ocean. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the centre of trade in South-east Asia was Malacca situated on the Straits of Malacca and ruled by a Muslim Sultan. Duarte Barbosa was emphatic in stating that, '. . . . the city of Malacca is the richest seaport with the greatest number of wholesale merchants and abundance of shipping and trade that can be seen in the whole world[2]. . . 'The merchants in Malacca were not merely the Muslims. Chinese merchants brought silk, porcelain, rhubarb, musk and other Chinese products to the emporium. Japanese merchants (called Gores in Portuguese records) brought copper, silk, bullion, swords and daggers and like the Chinese took away much pepper and cloves. Hindu Chetti merchants from the Coromandel (Eastern) Coast of India – klings as the Portuguese called them – came in large numbers. So did Buddhist merchants from Pegu (south Burma) and Jain and Hindu merchants from Gujerat. However, the Muslim merchants were by far the most numerous though they generally operated individually or in groups or according to their ethnic origin and never as one cohesive group. Some of them were Gujerati Muslim merchants. Thome Pires reported that one thousand out of the four thousand merchants in Malacca were Gujeratis[3] and it seems clear that most of them were Muslims. They brought in not only food-stuffs and indigo from Gujerat but also the numerous varieties of Gujerati cloth – muslins and

calicos, patterned cloth and **patolas** – all of which were in great demand in different parts of South-east Asia. The Gujerati Muslims also participated in the trade between West Asia and Malacca bringing in products of the region and of Europe – coral, quicksilver, vermillion, nails, glassware, copper, opium and woollen cloth. They took away pepper, spices and sandalwood to India and the Red Sea ports. The Gujerati traders were supplemented by Arabs and the modern Portuguese historian Vitorino Magalhaes Godinho estimates that some fifty ships were engaged in trade between the Red Sea ports and Malacca.[4] There were few Persian merchants in Malacca but the Muslim element was strengthened by the Bengalis who brought in rice, sugar and conserves to Malacca and the numerous Javanese traders who supplied the great sea port with rice and spices. Finally there were the Malay merchants who brought in produce from nearby areas – tin from Malay ports, gold and pepper from Sumatra and camphor from Borneo.[5]

While Malacca was the major commercial centre in the area in the early sixteenth century its position was by no means undisputed. Muslim Malacca's commercial pre-eminence was challenged first by Pedir and then by Pase. Soon after Malacca fell into Portuguese hands in 1511, the exiled Sultan of Malacca established a rival commercial centre further down the coast at Johore. Finally in the 1530s there rose Atjeh, the strongest Muslim trading power in South-east Asia in the period. As the Portuguese historian Joao de Barros explained, 'of all the kingdoms, that of Pedir was the greatest and the most famous in these regions and was so before Malacca was inhabited. In it came together what went from the West and came from the East by reason of the emporium and market where goods of all kinds could be found and because the city commanded the strait between the island of Sumatra and the mainland. But after the foundations of Malacca and especially at our entry to India the kingdom of Pacem began to grow and that of Pedir to decline – and that of Achem [Atjeh] its neighbour being then but of little power is now greatest of all.'[6]

Despite the numerous power struggles which arose between the various trading powers security of goods and fairness of treatment was a factor essential to attract merchants to any port. Malacca under Muslim rule had four Shahbandars each in charge of a group of merchants from a distinct region. Their tasks were to assess and collect the dues payable to the Sultan, to settle disputes between merchants and to present the needs and grievances of merchants to the ruler.[7] The provision of a secure environment for trade was not confined to South-east Asia. In the early 'seven-

teenth century James Lancaster made the following remark about the port of Mocha in the Red Sea where, 'a man may passe heere quyetely all seasons, both day and night without molestation, Goodes lying continually upon the key without pillferinge or puyloyninge,[8] and fifteenth century accoûnts of the port of Calicut in Kerala give the same picture. "Society and justice are so firmly established in this city that the most wealthy merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes which they unload and unhesitatingly send into the markets and the bazars without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the accounts or of keeping watch over the goods. . . . when a sale is effected they levy a duty on the goods of one fourth the part; if they are not sold they make no charge on them whatsoever. . . . At Calicut every ship whatever place it may come from or whenever it may be bound, when it puts to the port is treated like other vessels and has no trouble of any kind to put up with"[9] . . . .

A similar picture of peaceful and orderly trade is drawn in the account of commerce in the port of Cámbaye in the late sixteenth century in the writings of Cesare Federici. "There are in this city certain brokers which are gentile and of great authority and have everyone of them fifteene or twenty servants and the merchants that use that country have their brokers with which they are served and they that have not bene there are informed by their friends of the order and of what broker they shall be served. Now every fifteene days (as above sayd) that the fleet of small ships entreth into the port, the broker came to the waterside and the merchants as soone as they are come on land do give the cargason of all their goods to that broker that will have to do their business for them with marks of all the fardles and packs they have and the merchants having taken on land all his furniture for his house because it is needful that the merchants that trade in the Indies carry provision of household with them because that in every place where they come they must have a new house, the broker that hath received his cargosan commandeth his servants to carry the merchants furniture for his house home and load it on on some cart and carry it into the city when the brokers have divers empty houses for the lodgings of merchants furnished only with the bedsteds, tables, chairs and empty jarres for water, then the Broker sayeth to the Merchant, goe and repose yourselfe and take your rest in the city. The broker tarrieth at the waterside with the cargosan and causeth all his goods to be discharged out of the ship and payeth the customs and causeth it to be brought into the house where the merchant lieth, the Merchant not knowing anything thereof, neither custome nor charges.

These goods being brought to this passe into the house of the merchant the broker demandeth of the merchant if he have any desire to sell his goods or merchandise at the prices that such wares are worth at the present time? And if he hath desire to sell his goods presently, then at that instant the broker selleth them away. After this the broker sayeth to the merchant you have so much of every sort of merchandise neat and clear of every charge and so much ready money. And if the merchant will employ his money in other commodities then the broker telleth him that such and such commodities will cost so much, put aboard without any maner of charges. The merchant understanding the effort makes his account; and if he thinks to buy or sell at the prices current he giveth order to make his merchandise away; and if he hath commodity for 20,000 ducats, all should be bartered or solde away in fifteen days without any care or trouble; and when the merchant thinketh that he cannot sell his goods at the prise current he may tary as long as he will but they cannot be solde by any men but by the broker that hath taken them on land and payed the customs: and perchance tarying sometimes for sale of their commodity they make good profit and sometimes loose".[10] ....

We have no information as to whether trade was as efficiently organised in other areas but basic conditions for the development of peaceful trade generally existed in centres of trade like Bengal. Bengali trade, despite the participation of some Chetti traders from the Coromandel Coast was almost entirely in the hands of Muslims. The chief ports of Bengal were its capital Gaur and Satgaon (Porto Grande). As these river ports became gradually silted up larger ships began to unload lower down at Hughli. Moreover throughout this period Chittagong (Porto Pequeno) often under the ruler of Arakan remained an important outlet for Bengal. Not only did Bengali traders bring produce from South-east Asia and East Asia, from Malacca, Johore and the Sumatran ports but they also obtained the same products from Siamese ports in the Indian Ocean – especially Tennassarim and Kedah. Bengalis also sailed to South Burma (Pegu) to purchase elephants, rice, rubies and ships in the three ports of Martaban, Dagon (modern Rangoon) and Cosmin (near modern Bassain). Then again Bengali traders sailed to the Coromandel Coast where they exchanged the finer Bengali muslims for the **pintados** or patterned cloth and the rough cottons that were in great demand in South-east Asia. They also sailed to Sri Lanka where they sold rice and conserves and purchased elephants, gems and pearls. A few ships sailed to the Maldives to obtain saltfish and a particular variety of cowries that served as small change in Bengal. Bengalis are also known to have had direct trading contacts with the Malabar coast and the Red Sea ports.[11]

An examination of the activities of the Muslim traders of Bengal brings out another feature of trade in the Indian Ocean in this period. It was not an exchange limited to the littoral of the Indian Ocean. Much of the seaborne imports to Bengal were not consumed within the country. Bengal's ports formed the starting point of a great caravan route along the Ganges extending through Patna, Allahabad and Agra to Delhi and Lahore on the one hand and to Gujerat and the Deccan on the other. This is why the eventual occupation of Bengal by the Moghal Empire stimulated further development of trade in the area. A similar large hinterland was also available for the ports of Gujerat and indeed for many of the ports on the Indian Ocean. Indeed one could well agree with Fernand Braudel's statement that, "The Indian Ocean was a Weltwirtschaft [Economic-world] with India as its centre."(12)

In Bengal and in South-east Asia Muslim traders were often operating in areas politically dominated by Muslims. Indeed in South-east Asia the spread of Islam seems closely related to Muslim trading routes. However in other areas on the Indian Ocean littoral Muslim economic power developed even where there were non-Islamic rulers. For instance in parts of South India some of the Chetti traders had accepted Islam and were termed 'Chatim Mouros' by the Portuguese.(13) In the extreme south the Muslim chieftains of Palayakayal and Kilakkarai controlled the pearl fishery. Although these chieftains were nominally under the Hindu rulers of Travancore and Vanga respectively they exercised considerable power.(14) Describing the ruler of Palayakayal Duarte Barbosa says, "He is so rich and powerful that all the people of the land honour him as much as the king. He executes judgement and justice on the Moors without interference from the king."(15) In the neighbouring island of Sri Lanka when the Muslims exercised no political authority the Muslims dominated the entire foreign trade. They exported elephants, coconuts and arecanut to India and gems and cinnnamon further afield. Some of these Muslim traders came from Arabia and others from Gujerat but a number were the Mappila traders of Kerala.(16)

The Mappilas were a group of local Muslim traders in the Malabar region. They had intermarried with the local people and formed about a fifth of the population of the area. Besides controlling the cinnamon trade of Sri Lanka the Mappilas also dominated commerce with the Maldives and participated in trade with Gujerat. There were however, other important communities of merchants in this area - notably the Muslim traders from Gujerat, Arabia and Persia and two less important groups – the Hindu Chettis and merchants of the local Hindu Vyabari caste.

Malabar was an area under four major Hindu rulers who had a number of chieftains under them – all four rulers living under the power of the neighbouring Hindu Vijayanagara Empire. The four rulers were the raja of Kolathunad who ruled the region from the Nileswaram river and included the port of Cannanor, the raja of Khozikhode (Calicut), the raja of Cranganore and the raja of Venad who ruled Kollam (Quilon). The ports of the area exported the major local product – pepper and were supplied with rice and ginger from the ports of the Konkani coast like Bhatkal, Goa and Dabul and were also centres of a great exchange of goods brought from all over the Indian Ocean.[17]

Gujerat ruled by a Muslim Sultan was an equally important centre of trade exporting cloth, rice, indigo as well as numerous other manufactured goods and food-stuffs from ports such as Cambay, Rander, Diu and later Surat. Gujerat with its access to the rich and populous areas of North India was an important market to which ships sailed from all regions in the Indian Ocean.[18]

The trade between the Western coast of India on the one hand and Persia and Arabia on the other illustrates a further characteristic of Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean; its dependence on seasonal winds. Gujerat and the Malabar became great commercial centres not merely because they were sources of valuable trade goods or possessed extensive markets but also because they were regions to which traders from Arabia and Persia could sail, conclude business transactions and return within a year. Although longer direct voyages were made the usual practice was for a second group of merchants to take trading goods from Western India to Bengal and South-east Asia and for yet another to trade in the Spice Islands and the China Sea.

This was partly because Arab ships, though capacious were lightly built with timbers sewn together with coir rope. They were swift before the wind but were not really able to withstand the strong monsoon winds. The weather and wind direction were all important for them. The ships of the Bay of Bengal were generally built in sturdier fashion to withstand the occasional cyclones in the area but they were slower to sail and then also sailed in times of favourable wind and weather.[19] Indeed this practice was encouraged by the fairly reliable pattern of monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean. Thus ships took predictable paths and sailed at specific times of the year.

Secondly, merchants who plied the trade were generally small scale traders. There were of course extremely rich merchants. Duarte Barbosa writing about Malacca states that, "There is a merchant there who alone will discharge three or four ships laden with every kind of valuable goods and reload them alone from his own stock."[20] In the early sixteenth century the export of cinnamon from Sri Lanka to the Malabar seems to have been a virtual monopoly of Cherian Marakkar and his brothers – (Mappila traders of Malabar)[21] who also controlled the coir rope trade of the Maldives. However, most traders were men who operated with limited capital sometimes obtained on loan. A Dutch account of trade at Bantam in the early seventeenth century states, "The rich merchants stay at home and never travel. When ships are ready to sail they give a sum of money to the masters or pilots on condition to have it doubled when they return safe, sometimes more or less according as to the voyage is long or short.. . . ."[22] This seems identical with practices described by Thome Pires a century before. Sir Thomas Roe, English envoy to the Moghul Court wrote in 1616 with some exaggeration that there were, "neither in Persia nor here in any city where merchants reside nor where goods are staple by wholesale but those they call merchants pass up and down like badgers [petty travelling salesmen] with packs and buy only little quantities such as they retail following the king's court or other great men."[23]

Hundreds of traders crossed the Arabian Sea annually. Ormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf was a great trade centre under Muslim rule. Goods from Europe, Persian and Arab horses, rugs and carpets from Persia and Turkey, dates and opium from Arabia were exchanged for the produce of India, South-east Asia and China. The coast of Arabia was dotted with small ports to which Gujeratis and other traders brought rice and other food-stuffs as well as cloth from India. At the entrance to the Red Sea were the important ports of Aden and Mocha where the larger ships sailing the Indian Ocean unloaded goods for transhipment to Jeddah or Tor from whence caravans conveyed the goods to the Mediterranean.[24]

Arabs and Gujeratis also dominated the lucrative trade between India, Arabia and East Africa. East African products – chiefly gold, ivory, hard woods and slaves were exported from ports such as Sofala, Kilwa, Mombasa, Malindi and Pate. In exchange traders brought in cloth, glass beads and trinkets. The inhabitants of these port-towns were Muslims of mixed Asian-Negro extraction who played an important intermediary role in obtaining those trading goods from tribes in the interior of Africa.[25]

The pattern of trade was thus a complex one. The traders who participated were men willing to travel to distant lands and to take risks for market prices were prone to fluctuations and could lead to riches or ruin. The early Portuguese writers have left some graphic descriptions of the Muslim merchants they met. Portuguese historian Fernao Lopes de Castanheda for instance wrote, "The people of Ormuz are Muslims – Arabs and Persians. The former are dark and the latter fair and all are fond of music and luxury. The women are beautiful but cloistered. The men wear a **kabaya** of fine silk or cotton cloth worn with a short and shoes. They wear cape of red."[26] Another Portuguese commentator writing about the Muslims of East Africa stated, ". . . from the waist down they cover themselves with cotton and silk cloths and carry other silk cloths thrown under their arms in the manner of cloaks and [wear] their turbans on their heads and some of them wear little hoods of a quarter of a grain cloth, others narrow woollen cloth of many colours and of camlet and other silk."[27] Turbans, fine cotton and silk cloth and slippers are given as the dress of Muslim merchants from Aden to Java. The picture is one of an enterprising and prosperous group of traders.[28]

The impact on the arrival of the Portuguese, the first European sea-power in the Indian Ocean on the pattern of Muslim trade and its consequences have been the subject of a great deal of controversy in recent years. Some writers urge that the coming of the Portuguese had profound political and economic consequences. Historian Arnold Toynbee for example held that, ". . . with the substitution of the Ocean for the Steppe as the principal medium of world communication . . . the centre of the world made a sudden jump. . . from the steppe ports of Central Asia to the ocean ports of the Atlantic."[29] W. E. D. Allen expresses similar ideas in less restrained language. "Since the accession of Selim I in 1512 it is clear that the Ottomans had perceived the implications of 'the Oceanic Revolution'. After the accession of Suleiman the Ottomans found themselves involved in a world conflict with the Ibero-Germanic power which had established a hegemony in Western and Central Europe and was beginning to enjoy the resources of new trans-oceanic dominion and commerce."[30] Writing on the economic impact Portuguese historian Jose Maria Braga argues that, "it is indisputable that the Portuguese had a great deal to do with the spread of financial and exchange arrangements in Southern Asia and the East Indies. Insurance of a kind grew around the commercial and shipping operations of the time while the Portuguese bills of lading, instruments of credit, **respondencia** bonds and other commercial documents came to circulate everywhere. A code of business conduct and practice was worked

out and a system of weights and measures was recorded and popularized. A great many commercial terms now in common use owe their origin or wider adoption to the Portuguese."[31]

Other verdicts are much more critical. Jacob Cornelius van Leur writing over forty years ago held that, "The Portuguese regime partially supplanted Oriental trade but though it did not stimulate it, it left it for the most part intact."[32] He further held that, "The Portuguese colonial regime then did not introduce a single new element into the commerce of Southern Asia."[33] Malyn Newitt was equally critical.". . .whether in the Far East, the Persian Gulf, Indonesia or East Africa the Portuguese were simply middlemen – a role filled with less violence and more flexibility by the Muslims of India and Arabia before their arrival."[34] Then again other historians have pointed out that the significance of the opening of a sea route round the Cape of Good Hope should not be overrated as trade flows along old channels resumed after a short break. Andrew C. Hess points out that, "Neither the Iberians nor the Ottomans continuously patrolled all areas, dominated sea spaces or blockaded ports. Naval actions were episodical and confined geographically at first to Red Sea regions, only moving at mid-century to the Persian Gulf. Under these conditions a good portion of the old Indian Ocean commerce passed through the porus frontier created by the Portuguese at the extremities of the Arabian Peninsula."[35] Fernand Braudel pointed out that, "The Mediterranean commerce to the Orient. . . . could only be stopped by force which meant overseeing the points of origin. The Portuguese succeeded in doing this on several occasions. . . . but the rigour of their surveillance lasted but a limited time and then relaxed of its own accord."[36] Finally the work of historians such as Irfan Habib have clearly indicated that developed commercial practices including bills of exchange, banking and credit arrangements existed in many parts of Asia long before the arrival of the Portuguese.[37]

Any assessment of the Portuguese impact requires an understanding of Portuguese commercial objectives in the Indian Ocean. The key objective of the Portuguese Crown was well defined in the instructions issued to Francisco de Almeida, first Portuguese Viceroy of India on 5 March 1505. ". . . . nothing would be of more import to our service than to have a fortress at the mouth of the Red Sea or near to it either inside or outside wherever best placed to close it and prevent any more spices from passing to the hands of the Sultan [of Turkey] and persuade all the people of India to put aside the fantasy that they can ever again trade with any but

ourselves"[38] De Almeida was authorised to make agreements even with Muslim rulers on condition that the Red Sea trade was ended. However, the Portuguese soon found that this alone was insufficient. A military presence in the East was expensive. It could not be paid for by East-West trade alone especially as the Portuguese had few goods which could be sold in the sophisticated markets of the East. The Portuguese thus began to participate in, regulate and profit from the commerce of the Indian Ocean as much as they could.[39] They were sometimes obliged to do so for as Affonso de Albuquerque optimistically wrote to his king on 1 December 1513 , "Henceforth it is for you to supply India with merchandise since the mouth of the straits, please Our Lord, is closed."[40]

The Muslim response was partly a military one. A small Egyptian squadron with Turkish aid challenged the Portuguese off India in 1506 and won some success before being defeated by Francisco de Almeida. In 1516 Egyptian Admiral Salman Reis successfully defended Jiddah against Portuguese attack and the Red Sea thenceforth remained a Muslim dominated lake. The extension of Turkish power along the Red Sea coast and into the Persian Gulf area began a new era of conflict. A Turkish fleet under Suleiman Pasha tried and failed to seize Diu in 1538. In 1552 Turkish Admiral Piri Reis attacked and destroyed the Portuguese fort at Muscat but failed to take Ormuz. Finally in 1585 Mir Ali Beg's sudden attack on Portuguese allies on the East African coast demonstrated their vulnerability in that region and eventually provoked the building of a new Portuguese fort at Mombasa.[41]

Turkish attempts to defeat the Portuguese at sea in the Indian Ocean failed in the end because of their outmoded techniques of naval warfare. Although they did use guns and sailing vessels they continued to rely on rowing galleys and on ramming and bounding techniques. These were used with success in the relatively calm Red Sea and the Persian Gulf but proved inadequate in ocean warfare. They also had problems in obtaining timber and supplies in the Red Sea regions.[42] Nevertheless the Turkish effort was not a total failure. Their control of the upper reaches of the Persian Gulf meant that from the late 1530s a blockade of the Red Sea area was of little use if supplies could flow to Turkey and through Turkey to Europe *via* the Persian Gulf.[43]

Problems relating to resources and the policy of building smaller swift vessels led to the inability of the Samorin of Calicut to confront the Portuguese in the open seas. However, once again the Portuguese victory was a qualified one. The Malabar Muslims used small craft with a shallow

draught so that they could sail close to the shore or to inland waters to escape Portuguese pursuit if outgunned while the mounting of cannon on these ships enabled the Muslims to attack merchantmen sailing under Portuguese protection.[44] The depredations of these corsair/merchants were so great that by the 1550s the Portuguese were forced to use convoys to protect their merchant shipping.[45]

In and around Malacca where Portuguese naval strength was much weaker it was often the Islamic states that were on the offensive. In 1550 a Japanese attack on Malacca was repulsed after considerable fighting. In 1568, 1571, 1573 and 1582 Atjehnese forces attacked Malacca. By the 1540s a great revival of Muslim trade with the Red Sea regions was under way and by the 1560s Atjehnese exports of pepper to the Red Sea alone exceeded the quantity of pepper transported by the Portuguese *via* the Cape route.[46]

The military response however, was not the only one. In some areas Muslim rulers and traders acquiesced in Portuguese control. Michael Pearson reports that the rulers of Gujerat had no objection to the control of the foreign trade of the country by the Portuguese and that, ".....the merchants made no attempt to oppose the arbitrary and exploitive demands of the Portuguese once they realised the Portuguese could enforce their system most of the time. The merchants accommodated rather quickly and indeed co-operated with their exploiters."[47] In the 1590s when the Portuguese Crown ordered that all temples and mosques in Portuguese domains be destroyed except at Ormuz the Governor of India replied that the order, "cannot be put into effect in Diu because everyone would leave and then there would be no trade there."[48] Francois Pyrard writing in the early seventeenth century pointed out, "As regards the retail trade of the island of Goa it must be noted that it is all done by the Banians, Canarins and other foreigners, gentiles and Mahometans and rarely by the Portuguese, metifs or Christian Indians."[49]

There was one other option left to Muslim traders. That was simply to try to evade Portuguese control without challenging them militarily and this option was taken in many areas especially where Portuguese military and naval power was episodic. The Bay of Bengal provides many such instances and trade in East Africa some others. In east Africa the Portuguese built a fort at Sofala to control the export of gold but Muslim traders swiftly developed an alternative trading centre at Angoche outside Portuguese control. By 1511 Angoche was reputed as a commercial centre with 12,000 inhabitants. Rival Muslim commercial centres arose on the

Querimba Islands and in Mombasa. The Portuguese attacked Angoche in 1511, the Querimba Islands in 1523 and Mombasa in 1528, but failed to stop Muslim trade which throve due to the lack of sufficient Portuguese shipping and their greater commercial expertise and links with the African interior.[50]

On the other hand Muslim trade did not survive unscathed. The Portuguese continued to seize ships sailing in the Indian Ocean without **cartazes** from them and they monopolised trade in the most profitable routes and in many key products. Muslim merchants could still gain profit in trade and indeed some of them made great fortunes even in the eighteenth century but their opportunities were more restricted. A new dominant trading group had arrived. As C. R. Boxer summed up, "The Portuguese monopoly of the seaborne trade of the Indian Ocean was not of course a fully effective one even though their possession of Mozambique, Ormuz, Diu, Goa and Malacca did enable them to regulate the course of maritime trade in that region to a very considerable extent for almost the whole of the sixteenth century."[51]

There is one other aspect that needs to be considered before this paper is concluded. Some of those who attempt to assess the significance of the Portuguese impact tend to take the situation at the beginning of the sixteenth century and that at the end and conclude that the changes were due mainly if not solely to Portuguese activities. M. A. P. Meilink – Roelofsz for instance argues that Portuguese and Spanish activities did lead to an increase in production especially in the Spice Islands.[52] There is indeed evidence that spice production did increase in the sixteenth century. Indeed pepper production increased even more dramatically. Nevertheless, the causes for the stimulation of production extend far beyond mere Portuguese participation. For instance development of trade depended a great deal upon stable political conditions which ensured safe passage for goods. The importance of this factor has been emphasized in recent studies by Ashin Das Gupta and Niels Steensgaard.[53] The early sixteenth century saw the establishment or re-vitalisation of three major Islamic Empires – the Moghul Empire in India (1526), the Safavid Empire in Persia (1502) and an expanding Ottoman Empire in Turkey, Egypt, Arabia and Iraq. There is little doubt that the development of trade from the 1550s was in part due to the conditions of peace and security ensured by the rule of vast areas by these empires.[54] Then again a rise in production was also probably stimulated by the 'price revolution' that occurred in Asia following the influx of American silver to Asia through both Europe and the Philippine Islands.[55] While much more study and

research is needed to assess the significance of these developments, they certainly cannot be ignored in any evaluation of the causes for the increased production of certain trading goods.

This paper began with a picture of Muslim traders in a dominant position in Asian trade. It ends with Muslim trade still important but clearly subservient to the Portuguese. The major reason for this of course was the inability of the Muslims to match Portuguese naval power and this weakness was one of the key factors which enabled other European powers especially the Dutch and the English to further encroach on areas hitherto in Muslim hands. Muslim trade declined not due to the lack of commercial expertise but because it was faced with the use of force based on superior technology.

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47. M. N. Pearson **Merchants and rulers in Gujerat op cit** p. 4 ; V. Magalhaes Godinho **op cit** II, p.37 effectively contradicts the contention of Meilink-Roelofiz **op cit** p.118 that, "As soon as the Portuguese arrived on the scene Islam took up arms against the intruder."

48. **Archivo Historico Ultramarino,** Lisboa, codice 281,f.260
A Portuguese Jesuit complained at Cochin on 5 December 1552, "All the Portuguese in these parts trade in horses and arms and other kinds of goods with Moors, Jews and all kinds of infidels." **Documenta Indica, op cit** II, p. 130.

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V

MUSLIMS UNDER DUTCH RULE IN SRI LANKA 1638 – 1796*

D. A. Kotelawele

At the end of the 16th century not long after the attainment of the nationhood the Dutch had acquired for themselves a dominant position as a major carrier and distributor of eastern produce in Europe. By this time they also had developed strong traditions of commerce, finance and shipping. After the publication of Jan Huygen Van Linschoten's **Itinerario** they managed to obtain a great deal of geographical, political and commercial knowledge of the east which the Portuguese had kept a closed secret. Shortly after the publication of Linchoten's work companies were formed in the Dutch republic with the aim of trading with the east. These companies were initially successful; but soon it became apparent that competition among them in the east was creating a situation of competition at the buyers market and raising the purchase price; and often, excess imports of eastern produce to the European market, was depressing prices there. This situation led to the creation of one large commercial organisation, a chartered Company, known as the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) or the United East India Company, by the Dutch state. The Company's charter granted by the Dutch state, gave it the authority to make treaties, establish settlements, build fortifications and maintain armies and navies.

At the time of the arrival of the Dutch in the east, in the last decade of the 16th century, the Portuguese had established themselves as the dominant sea power with a firm control over the sea lanes and major trade emporia. Portuguese activities in the east had been characterised by a ruthless policy of proselytisation and destruction of Asian religions and religious establishments. The Muslims bore the brunt of Portuguese religious and political

oppression, mainly because of Portuguese anti-Islamism acquired in Europe and also because they found that the adherents of Islam were the chief rivals to their commercial and political ambitions in Asia. Followers of the faith of Islam formed the major trading groups in Asia, especially in the Indian Ocean region.

The Dutch enterprise in the east in the 17th and 18th centuries was guided by a much more rational commercial spirit and religious aims formed a clearly secondary role in it. It must also be noted that at the beginning their religious policy was very much directed towards combatting Roman Catholic influences which were closely tied up with the fortunes of Portuguese imperial and commercial activity; this was especially true of the 17th and early 18th centuries.

Religious factors played an important role in the Dutch war of independance against the Spaniards and in the formation of the Dutch state. Consequently the spread of "true reformed christianity" informed and inspired much of their religious policy in the east. It must also be noted that the Dutch too were inheritors of the anti-Islamism of the Christendom and this was very much in evidence in the early guidelines of policy laid down by the Dutch in Asia. What is more, the Dutch too found that the Muslims in Asia were the major rivals to their enterprise, and this made them extremely hostile to the Muslims especially in the 17th century.

I

The Muslims of Sri Lanka formed a well integrated community at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese on the shores of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's position in the Indian ocean trade routes seem to have attracted traders of many nationalities from ancient times and Muslim settlements seem to have been formed from the days of early Arab traders. Later converts to Islam from the Indian subcontinent too seem to have settled in Sri Lanka and these migrations continued even well into the 17th century and later.[1]

There were long established settlements of Muslims all along the coasts of the island as well as inland. Even Portuguese persecution do not seem to have succeeded in completely driving away the coastal Muslim settlements as evidence in Dutch records indicate the presence of these communities in the lowlands in the 17th century.[2]

Even though Portuguese persecution led to many Muslims to seek refuge in the Kandyan Kingdom, Muslim settlements in the Kandyan areas were much older than the 16th century. The Gopala Muslims of the Kegalla district which formerly belonged to the Kingdom of Kandy, seem to have settled there much earlier than the 16th century.(3)

Migration of Muslims from South India continued in the 17th and 18th centuries. Often seasonal migrations led to the creation of permanent settled communities. Trade was the main reason for these seasonal migrations and when permanent settlements were in the process of creations occasional hostility was encountered as can be seen from the following episode recorded in the mid 18th century Tamil work **Yalpana Vaipava Malai.** Following is the passage that described the episode.

"During the supremacy of the Ulanthesar [the Dutch], a colony of **Sonakar** [Muslims] came from **Kayilpaddanam** and other places and settled in **south-Mirisuvil,** the name of which they changed into **Usan.** They were originally **Tamils** by race but had embraced the **Mukammathu-matkam** [Islam] by the compulsion or persuasion of one **Santhach-chaivu.** Their chief means of subsistence was trade, which they carried on from fair to fair in **Savukach-cheri, Kodikamam, Eluthu Madduwal** and **Mukavil.** After a time they abandoned **Usan** and founded a new settlement in **Nallur** on and around the site of **Kantha-Suwami Koyil.** The **Tamils** viewed their presence with displeasure as they thought that it might be detrimental to the cause of their religion when the time should come for the restoration of the temple. They tempted the **Sonakar** to leave the place, with money and entreaties, which when they found unavailing, they had recourse to a plan that proved effectual. They put a quantity of pig's flesh into the wells of their enemy by night. When the defilement was discovered, the **Sonakar** were in great distress of mind. They could neither drink the water, nor cook their meals with it, and they saw themselves driven to the necessity of choosing between starvation on the one hand and emigration on the other. They chose the latter and sold the place for whatever money they could get from the **Tamils** and retired to the east of **Navanthurai.** Before they left, they however, had made a compact by which they retained to themselves the right of visiting the spot, at stated times, for purposes of **Muhammathan** worship even when a Tamil temple should happen to be afterwards built upon it". (4)

This passage is significant for three reasons. First it indicates how and why a group of Muslims came over to Sri Lanka through trade contacts and for trade. Secondly it is significant in that it shows the group trying to establish a community life of its own. Thirdly it indicates the kind of

initial hostility aroused in the sorrounding Hindu community and the manner in which the resulting conflict was resolved.

II

From evidence of sources in the 17th and 18th century the main professions and livelihood of the Muslims of Sri Lanka could be reconstructed. The best recorded and perhaps the most important profession among the Muslims seem to be that of trade. The retail trade within the island as well as the export and import trade of the island had been very much in the hands of the Muslims. The chetties, another mercantile community of migrants in the island seem to have played a very much secondary role in the island's trade.

There are many examples of Muslim traders in the south Indian region who typify the muslim entrepreneurship not only in this region but also in contemporary Sri Lanka. In the late 17th century there was Mir Jumla flourishing first in Bengal and then in Golcondaan administrator cum monopolist trader with interests extending among other places, to Sri Lanka, Tenasserim and Achin. Of somewhat lesser proportions and operating in the Malabar coast was Ali Raja a recognised and titled leader of the Muslim mercantile community in that region.[5]

Another Muslim trader of significance operating in south India in the latter part of the 17th century was Periathamby Marikkar who was resident in Ramnad, the principality of the Thevar. The Thevar himself was a vassal of the Nayak of Madura. The geographical position of the Thevar's territory was such that, it attracted a great deal of trade. The control of straits of Rameshwaram gave the Thevar a commanding position over the trade that passed between the Malabar and Coromandel coasts. This made a large community of Muslims settle in the lands of the Thevar and Periathamby Marikkar was certainly leader of this community in the latter half of the 17th century.

Periathamby was an active participant in the country trade of the region. He had vessels carrying trade goods of his own as well as on behalf of the Thevar to Bengal. It is also highly likely that he had a great deal of trade with such ports in the southern end of Coromandel coast such as Nagapatnam, Porto Novo, and Thirumalaivasal, as well as with Malacca and Achin on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal. He was also involved in the trade between India and Sri Lanka. This trade consisted of sending large quantities of Indian cloth across the Gulf of Mannar to the west coast ports of Sri Lanka, and taking arecanut produced in Sri Lanka, to Indian ports. In 1684 Periathamby and two other Indians offered to buy up the entire quantity of arecanut collected in Kalpitiya, up to 15000 amunams (i.e.

26000 nuts) at a fixed price. They also undertook to deliver 600 to 700 **lasts** of rice to Colombo at market price. The Dutch government of Colombo agreed to this proposal as it would enable them to dispose of their arecanut, of which they had the monopoly, at a reasonable price. However, the authorities in Batavia turned down the proposal on the argument that it would enable Periathamby and his associates to establish a monopoly of arecanut on the Coromandel coast.

The Dutch policy of trying to establish a monopoly of trade in the south Indian region came into conflict with the interests of Periathamby and a running conflict ensued between the two parties. The Dutch tried to prevent the pepper of Malabar being sent to Coromandel; they wanted to establish a monopoly of the cloth produced on the Madura coast; they tried to be the sole monopolist buyer of all chanks produced in this area and to be the sole supplier of arecanut produced in Sri Lanka to Madura and Coromandel coasts. By 1670 the Dutch had monopolised the trade of the entire seaboard of Sri Lanka. Control of the trade of the entire south Indian coast was essential for this monopoly.

The Dutch establishment of a stronghold on the sealanes of this region made Periathamby engage in smuggling. He also tried to induce the English and the French to come into this region with whose passes he could send out vessels. (The Dutch had difficulty in disregarding these passes when they were at peace with these nations.) Periathamby was also engaged in the supply of cloth produced in Ramnad to coastal traders. His influence in this sphere has been so great that it was believed that he could fix the market price of cloth in the region.

Periathamby's economic power was matched by a wide ranging political influence in Ramnad so much so that the Dutch portray him as the factotum and the evil genius behind the Thevar's anti Dutch attitudes. When the Thevar extended his political power along the coastline towards Tuticorin, he appointed Periathamby as the tax collector in the new lands. Periathamby also had weilded some judicial authority in the Thevar's lands. His influence and authority has been so resented by the Dutch that in a treaty between the Dutch and the Thevar of Ramnad he and his relatives and his following were worthy of one clause in it; "in order that the Company may be reassured of His Excellency's [the Thevar's] goodwill, those who injure the Company such as Periathamby Marikkar, his two sons and his brothers and all other Moors who are associated with them, shall be removed from now on from all administrative authority of the lands from Kalimere to Cape Comorin and never more shall Moors be appointed there in any other service".[6]

Periathamby Marikkar had interests in the pearl fisheries around Tuticorin too, through the rights of the Thevar in these ventures. In the pearl fishery of 1697 he played a major role by setting up a ring of purchasers with the intent of depressing prices. Since this had the effect of lessening the profits of the Dutch Company they even contemplated seizing his vessels at Tuticorin, Puttalam and Mannar. These known activities of Periathamby Marikkar illustrate some significant points that are relevant to the subject of this paper : the nature of Muslim trading activity in the South India – Sri Lanka region, the influence and authority that leading Muslims seem to have weilded in non Muslim states in this region and Dutch policy towards native traders, and Muslim traders in particular.

III

From the time of early Dutch conquests in Sri Lanka in the region around Galle, one comes across references to trading activities of the Muslims. At this point of time cinnamon was not yet a monopoly of the Company and Maetsuycker instructs his successor that with regard to the sale of cinnamon to Muslim and other traders who came to Galle guidance must be sought in the instructions from Batavia.

He also notes that a large quantity of arecanut is obtained in the island and traded for cloth brought from Coromandel and that the chief beneficiaries of this trade were the Muslims.[7] Van Goens noted that the Muslims living in the coastal towns of Beruwala, Maggona and Aluthgama carried on a profitable trade with the Kingdom of Kandy.[8] The Kingdom of Kandy also had a well established trade with the south Indian coast through the Wanni and the ports in the Jaffna Peninsula. Muslims seem to have been the chief carriers of this trade.[9] This is evident from the instructions from the Governor to the Commandeur of Jaffna asking him to utilise the services of the Muslim traders of Jaffna who traded with Kandy, for intelligence work especially as the latter had a respected place in the Kandyan Kingdom and consequently complete freedom of movement there. In 1699, a Muslim trader brought a letter from a Kandyan official to the Commandeur of Jaffna requesting that the Muslim traders who plied their trade on pack bulls be granted freedom from paying all tolls in the Commandement.[10]

The 18th century provides many examples of Muslim traders in different parts of the country and in different roles. It is evident that Muslim traders were in close contact with the chiefs of the Kandyan Kingdom.

Many are the instances when the latter intervened with the Dutch on behalf of an errant Muslim trader. In 1743 the Kandyan Dissawe of three and four Korales, Dumbara, requested the Dutch authorities in Colombo to release 300 amunams of arecanut that the Dutch had taken into custody from a Muslim trader Abubakar Pulle by name on the plea that the areca belonged to him.[11] In 1759 in the port of Matara were found 105 vessels each with a capacity to carry 35 to 50 **amunams** of paddy. The paddy that was found in these vessels had been collected further south and among the owners of vessels carrying the paddy were Muslims.[12] In the 1790s the Muslims of Muselipattu and Anuradhapura offered to deliver pepper to the Company in Mannar.[13]

Many are the references in the sources to Muslims who owned vessels. In 1791 a quantity of arrack was sent to Mannar from Colombo in a vessel of one Segu Mira Lebbe Pakir Thambi.[14] In the same year Colombo Dutch authorities are seen sending some official papers in a vessel of a Muslim by the name of Sinne Pulle Marikkar.[15] Again in 1792 a quantity of cloth was sent by the Dutch in Colombo to Mannar in a vessel of one Lebbe Thambi Marikkar.[16] In 1793 at the request of the Commandeur of Jaffna the Colombo authorities agreed to keep a sum of 10,000 rix dollars belonging to one Mammadu Neina Lebbe of Jaffna. Further details with regard to the person are not known but it may be surmised that the person whose money the Dutch agreed to hold was a trader with whom they have had dealings earlier.[17]

As was seen in the case of Periathamby Marikkar of Ramnad, the Dutch efforts to monopolize the trade of the region led to hardships for local traders. This naturally led to smuggling by those who made a living by participating in trade. The Muslim community is often found named as the leading participants in this activity in the 17th and 18th centuries. The main articles of contraband seem to have been arecanut and spices from Sri Lanka and items like cloth and metals from India. These items being daily needs of the communities in India and Sri Lanka, had a ready market in the respective countries. The exact volume of this trade cannot be gauged since lists of smuggled items available are only from those vessels that were detected and captured.[18]

Contraband trade appears to have started soon after the establishment of the Dutch monopoly of the trade of the region, in the late 17th century. Governor Becker noted that the Muslims and the Chetties were the main carriers in this trade.[19] Across the narrow straits separating Sri Lanka

from India, the State of Ramnad proved to be a veritable haven for smugglers, and as was noted earlier, Periathamby Marikkar and his associates operated from there with the patronage of the Thevar. In Sri Lanka, the coast between Puttalam and Mannar was the chief theatre of operations for smugglers, in the period prior to 1766 when these lands still belonged to the Kandyan Kingdom. Muslim traders of the Kandyan Kingdom collected trade goods from the interior of the Kandyan areas and brought them to the district of Puttalam from whence it was taken down rivers and streams to the coast. From here the smugglers transported the goods to the lands of the Thevar by small vessels. No amount of cruising of these shores by the Dutch could put an end to this traffic. The northeastern coast too was an area frequented by smugglers as admitted by the Kandyans themselves. The coastline to the north of Trincomalee was an area favoured by smugglers.

Apart from the Muslims who were carriers of this contraband trade the other participants and chief beneficiaries seem to have been the higher officers of the Kandyan Kingdom. The intervention by Dissawe Dumbara in 1743 on behalf of a Muslim trader whose vessel and the 300 **amunams** of arecanut were confiscated by the Dutch seem to point in this direction. One of the Kandyan emissaries, a Muslim sent to India to solicit assistance for the King of Kandy in 1764 was one Umur Gatta, described by the Dutch as "a well known smuggler who lived in Kandy."[20] As reward for assistance in bringing the Pybus mission in 1762 from the English in Madras the King of Kandy is said to have cancelled the debts of one Maula Muhandiram who seems to have arranged the entire operation.[21] These instances indicate that the Kandyan political establishment had close financial ties with the Muslim trading community.

The Muslim community also was noted for its physicians apart from its ttaders, smugglers and commercial magnates in the period under consideration. It is difficult to trace how and when the Unani system of medicine was introduced to Sri Lanka; but the evidence is clear that the system and its practitioners the Muslim physicians were held in high esteem in society. According to the version given of one group of physicians, recorded by Bell, – the Gopala Muslims of Getaberiya in the Thunpalatha Pattuwa of Paranakuru korale in the Kegalle District – this group came to Sri Lanka from Goa in the days of the Kings of Kotte. They were first settled in the coastal areas, but were later summoned by a King of Kandy and made to reside in the Kandyan Kingdom on account of their prowess as physicians. The treatment of a queen of Kandy, according to the legend

recorded by Bell, earned for this group not only residence in Kandyan areas and land grants, but also honorary titles such as "Vaidyatilaka Rajakaruna Gopala Mudaliyar"; they also have been granted the privilege of wearing the dress of Kandyan chiefs. Members of the Gopala clan came to hold other offices of the Kandyan state as well – such as in the madige (transport department) in such outlying districts as Matale, Minneriya and Puttalam. This line of Muslim physicians retained their traditions in the profession of medicine well into British times. It is also evident from the oral tradition among the Gopala Muslims that their forefathers took Sinhalese spouses who became converts to Islam.[22]

A report submitted to the secret proceedings of the Dutch Political Council in 1762 – during the Kandyan – Dutch war, gives information of another Muslim physician. The report was submitted by the Chetty Mudaliar and Interpreter to the Governor. It mentions a Muslim physician who lived in Kirivandala of Hewagam Korale, who on account of the rebellions and troubles in the period 1758 – 60 moved to the Three and Four korales of the Kingdom of Kandy. His reputation as a physician soon made the Dissawe of Three and Four korales, Dumbara, receive him and make him treat his son who was ill. Dumbara even took this physician, Casie Lebbe Suleima Lebbe by name, to Kandy. Having treated the son of Dumbara Dissawe he returned to the Siyane korale in the Colombo District of the Dutch territories.[23] The ease with which Casie Lebbe seems to have moved about the country back and forth between Kandyan and Dutch territories indicates that he was a person of some repute with ample connections, both in the Kandyan areas and the Dutch territories.

There are a few references to Muslims in the tailoring profession. Maetsuycker writing in 1650 mentions that Muslim tailors were employed by the Company for making garments for the garrison, and that they were making good money out of the trade. He instructed his successor that this trade be handed over to the Burghers.[24] Van Goens writing in 1663 while expressing his resentment at the Muslim settlers around the fort of Colombo says that he had provisionally allowed sixteen Muslim tailors to reside in Colombo.[25]

Although the Dutch were initially averse to grant any offices or privileges to the Muslims, once they settled down to the task of administering their territorial conquests in real earnest, they were forced to accept realities and grant offices and privileges to the Muslims and to use the

latter in their economic scheme in the island. By late 17th century the Dutch found it necessary to appoint Muslim headmen to facilitate dealings with the Muslim community. After the conquest of Colombo by the Dutch, when the present Pettah area of Colombo was still fortified, the Wolvendal area had still been uninhabited: and before long many unauthorized persons came to settle there. Muslims and Chetties were the chief illicit occupiers of these lands. (It is possible that due to Portuguese persecution these communities were forced to leave the immediate environs of Colombo.) In order to deal with the question of unauthorized occupiers of lands a commission was appointed by Governor Simmons. This commission allocated different locations for the Muslims, Chetties, and Paravars in the immediate environs of the fort, and the different communities were placed under separate headmen of their own under the Dutch Dissawe of Colombo.[26]

It is possible that similar arrangements were made for the Muslim communities in other parts of the island under the Dutch: (conversely – it is also possible that what was devised for the environs of Colombo was merely what was already obtained in the other parts of the island.) In 1762 one Uduman Kandy Meestrie Aydroos Lebbe Marikkar was the headman of Muslims in Colombo.[27] Perhaps with the passage of time and the changing attitude of the Dutch towards the Muslims the humble position of a headman over Muslims over the immediate vicinity of Colombo grew to a position with a much wider jurisdiction. Towards the latter part of Dutch rule in the island one comes across similar headmanships in the Galle and Matara areas. In 1789 one Sinne Lebbe Marikkar Sekadie Lebbe is mentioned as the chief of Muslims of Matara one of whose important duties was to muster the ordinary Muslims for **Uliyam** – service.[28](i.e. obligatory public service of a few days a month.) There are also references to Muslim chiefs of Galle and Matara. In 1793 a Muslim **tolk** (translator and interpreter) has been appointed to the Commandeur's office in Jaffna by the Commandeur and the authorities in Colombo questioned the need for it.[29]

Certain incomes that the Dutch administration was not willing to collect through headmen were farmed out at annual auctions; these were termed rents. Muslims are found among the lists of renters in prominent numbers from about the middle of the 18th century, indicating their economic position of the community. In quite a number of these rents Muslims appear either as the principals or guarantors to the principals. Arecanut was a major source of income for the Dutch and the arecanut that the Dutch collected came from two sources: one was direct purchase

at a price fixed by them; the other was known as tax areca for which again a paltry price was paid.

Very often the inadequate prices and the tardiness with which payments were made for deliveries, made the inhabitants reluctant to deliver both purchase and tax areca. In mid 18th century the situation in the Galle and Matara districts was so bad that the inhabitants had just allowed the arecanut to rot under the trees rather than deliver them to the Company. In this situation it is said that "some resourceful Moors" offered to collect and deliver the tax areca at 4/5 rix dollars an **amunam** of 27000 nuts. The condition that they laid down was that when the tax arecanut was delivered fully by them, the Company would buy further deliveries from the Company territories as well as from the Kandyan areas at the Company's usual price of 2½ rix dollars per **amunam.** This proposal was accepted by the Governor.[30] This episode may be the prelude to the coming of the Muslims into the business of rents in a big way. In the latter half of the 18th century we find Muslims engaged in such rents as textiles, fish, paddy, gemming, bazaars and toddy and arrack.[31] Often we find them in partnership with others, like Burghers, Chetties and Sinhalese.

In the Commandement of Jaffna one Segu Neina Pulle Sevakadiaar was given part of the chaya root rent in 1790,[32] the fish rents of Mannar was given to a Muslim by the name of Kadenawi Marikkar in 1791,[33] and in the same year a Muslim from Wannarponne has been given the paddy rents of the village of Ottumapane.[34] The collection of customs duty in Mannar was rented by one Mannan Mapulle Malie Neina of Wannarponne in 1794.[35] Thus by the end of Dutch rule it appears that the Muslims had established themselves in the business of renting in a big way.

We have so far been mainly concerned with the elites of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka, traders, renters and physicians. In the Memoir of Van Goens senior we come across for the first time in Dutch sources references to the ordinary Muslim. The Memoir refers to the poorer Muslims who lived in the villages between Kalutara and Walawe rivers who were all service tenants of the Company. Apart from traditional service obligations, these tenants in addition paid a poll tax. Van Goens while displaying a great deal of hostility to the trading element in the Muslim community indicates that, this group of Muslim inhabitants who did not harm the interests of the Company be treated with consideration.[36] The ordinary Muslim inhabitant seems to have pursued some

form of agricultural pursuit and performed **uliyam** service for the Company, usually under their own headmen. Referring to the Muslims living around Colombo, Thomas Van Rhee notes that the Muslims along with Chetties and Paravars, paid no duties, poll tax or land rent but were bound to clear the forests outside the Negombo gate of the fort (i.e. the northern access to the fort) between Wolvendaal and the fort, and to count Company's arecanut and cash when called upon to do so, usually when the quantities received were large.[37] Late 18th century references to the Muslims of Galle and Matara make it very clear that they had to perform **uliyam** service to the Company and that their muster for service was the duty of Muslim headmen of Galle and Matara.[38]

We have reasonably good information on the duties and obligations to the Company, of the ordinary Muslim inhabitants of Jaffna. They are mentioned among those who were obliged to pay a tax known as **officie** – a tax levied on crafts and trading groups living in Jaffna peninsula.[39] In addition to paying the **officie** the Muslims of Jaffna were also obliged to pay a poll tax.[40] They had also to perform **uliyam** service to the Company.[41] Among these services were the work of hauling boats ashore, and the launching of boats for the Company; those who were traders in the bazaar were required to come to the fort and assist the Company cashier in counting copper coin.[42] Both these services were, as can easily be surmised, connected with the main occupations for the Muslims in this region, namely, seafaring and peddling.

IV

No account of the Muslims of Sri Lanka in the 17th and 18th centuries would be complete without an indication of the political role they played in the Kingdom of Kandy. In the 17th and 18th centuries the Muslims proved to be a useful contact with the outside world for the virtually landlocked kingdom. Muslims found the Kandyan areas a useful refuge from persecution in the Portuguese times, and a fruitful area of economic activity. Their commercial ties with the nobility and the court of Kandy were earlier referred to. The special position of the physicians, – especially of the Gopala clan is illustrated by Bell's account of them. This position makes them figure in the high politics of the Kingdom of Kandy. In 1760 there was a conspiracy to murder King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe and place a Siamese prince on the throne of Kandy hatched by some sections of the Kandyan aristocracy in alliance with a section of the Kandyan Buddhist establishment.[43] The conspiracy was foiled, and one of the informants

who helped to foil the conspiracy was a Gopala Mudaliar from the Getaberiya clan. The episode indicates that the leading Muslims of Kandy were very much privy to the high politics of the Kandyan Kingdom.

During the Kandyan – Dutch war of 1760 – 66 the Muslims became extremely useful to the court of Kandy in soliciting support for their cause in south India. The entire Pybus mission of 1762 seems to have been engineered by the Muslims: it is also possible that they masterminded it. The chief character involved was one Maula Muhandiram. Judging by the name it seems he already held some titled position. He had two sons who engaged in the actual mission to seek assistance from the English in Madras; one of them is known by the name of Uduma Lebbe. Dutch sources mention that "the notorious Maula Muhandiram" acted as the interpreter to the Pybus mission in Kandy. Apart from the financial rewards that Maula Muhandiram received, he also received many tokens of honour from the King of Kandy for his services. Reports vary as to these: one report mentions that he received a gold chain and a silver broad sword; another mentions that a son of Maula Muhandiram received a gold chain and a palanquin.[44]

After the initial success against the Dutch in the war that started in 1760 the Kandyan offensive seems to have stalled. Meanwhile after hearing of the Pybus mission Batavian authorities asked the Dutch in Colombo to take the offensive against Kandy in late 1762.

After some initial failures Van Eck the Dutch Governor succeeded in taking Kandy in early 1765. Just prior to this, Kandyans had sent an emissary, once again a Muslim, to the south Indian coast to seek assistance against the Dutch. The emissary Umur Gatta, by name appears to have been associated with the mission arranged by Maula Muhandiram in 1761–62. He is said to have contacted Nawab Ali Khan in Arcot, friend of the English in 1761.[45] In 1765 he was captured on his way to India by the Dutch and taken to Tuticorin where he escaped from captivity. After his escape he is said to have once again sought the assistance of Nawab Ali Khan with a request for two ships and 4000 troops. He has been referred to Ramnad from Arcot, to the Chief Minister and regent to the young Thevar, Thamoderem Pillai. The latter was not interested in assisting Kandy at this stage, and tried to use the occasion to gain some concessions for Ramnad from the Dutch in accordance with some earlier treaties. Furthermore, by this time the news of the conquest of Kandy by Van Eck had reached the rulers of Malabar and Coromandel coasts and this

too had an adverse effect on Gatta's mission. Thus the second mission of the Kandyans through a Muslim emissary ended in failure.[46]

V

We have so far not dealt with Dutch 'policy' **per se** toward the Muslims in Sri Lanka even though aspects of it would have been clear in the foregoing. An account of Dutch policy as well as changes therein over the entire period is instructive in studying the fortunes of the Muslim community. The Dutch determination to master the trade of the island was an aspect of this policy already referred to. At the beginning of Dutch rule in the island they also made a very serious effort to establish a colony of settlers on the model of Portuguese **casados** who were to take over such economic activities that the Company itself could not engage in; they were also to form a resource of adjunct manpower for the Company.[47] These aims at the beginning of Dutch rule in the island combined with their anti Islamism inherited from Europe made them extremely hostile to the Muslim community judging by the early statements of their policy.

In 1650 Maetsuycker found the Muslims of Galle making profits from the profession of tailoring and wanted it to be given over to the Burghers; he also wanted the retail trade in arecanut taken away from the Muslims and given over to the Burghers.[48] After the conquest of Colombo by the Dutch the instructions to the Governor in Colombo from the Governor General and Council of Batavia prohibited any rents or leases to be given to Muslims; further no government work was to be entrusted to Muslims; nor were the Muslims to be allowed any booths or shops for the sale of any wares whatsoever. These instructions also favoured the granting of these privileges to the Burghers if the Company could not directly handle them: and failing Burghers they were to be granted to native Christians.[49] Van Goens Senior writing for the instruction of his successor noted that the Muslims must be gradually diverted from their involvement in internal trade.[50] The following passage from the Memoir of Van Goens illustrates well the Dutch attitude and policy towards the Muslims at the time:

"Our experience shows in how great a degree the Moors in this Island are in every respect a source of daily hindrance to us, being verily no other than a canker in the Hon: Company's profits, and the chief perverters of the morals both of our own people and the natives. They are also the people who, outside the Island, most betray our interests and place the greatest obstacles in our way. Chiefly is it necessary to remove some of the most important of them from the city of Galle, but before effecting any

change in this matter or stirring up this Samaria, we have at present ordered that all the heads of the families should again be registered under the special supervision of the Commandeur and the Dissava under whom they are respectively placed from Waluwe to Bentota, and that they should then be distributed under an able Dutch official (and I am not yet in a position to say where Y[Our] E[xcellency] can seek or find a suitable man), from Bentota to Waluwe. Those residing within the city of Galle should be entered separately in the same list and included in this register, with particulars as to the trade and means of livelihood of each. The poorer Moors who reside in the villages between the Kalutara and Walauwe rivers who are all our service tenants and are not prejudicial to our interests, may well be tolerated seeing that they can be employed to our profit, but all those whose profession it is to trade, scour the country, sail overseas with their goods, &c: all these are in the highest degree harmful to us; yet since all the Moors are the Hon: Company's subjects and slaves. Y[our] E[xcellency]'s practice should in future be to set to work the service tenants who are settled on the land and reside outside Galle, and to recover their poll-tax and also two years' arrears from those who have trafficked overseas or are otherwise engaged in trade. No permission should be granted them in future to traffic by sea, and those who come here from other places should not be treated indulgently but on the contrary discouraged in order to divert them from Ceylon. This is intended to apply only to those Moors who are called Chioly and are of pirate descent, but in no wise to the Bengal and Hindustanee Moors who come here with rice and take away our elephants and other goods in exchange and who do not desire to settle here among us. The latter can accordingly not be indulged too much. Having arrived at Batavia, I shall place everything before their Excellencies in order to ascertain their wishes regarding this important matter, and in the meantime it is important that Colombo should remain entirely purged of the race of Moors."(51)

The above passage is significant, among other things, for the distinction it makes between the Muslims who engaged in trade and others, and also for singling out Muslim traders from Bengal and 'Hindustan' for special favourable treatment. The special treatment recommended for the latter group of Muslim traders was due to their utility to the Dutch in their commercial scheme.

Strong religious antagonism also marked this initial stage of Dutch policy in the island. Maetsuycker advocated a strong policy of spreading Christianity for "rooting out heathenism, and checking the consuming canker of

Mohammedan heresy".[52] Van Goens Senior instructed the Dissawe of Matara not to permit the Muslims to perform any religious rites, or tolerate their priests either within or outside the town limits.[53]

These strident anti-Muslim sentiments in policy statements, however, could not easily be carried out. It was already noted that certain Muslim groups from India were singled out for preferential treatment by the Dutch, because of their value for Company's economic scheme. In 1690 the Commandeur of Jaffna, Blom, raised the question of enhancing the poll taxes and **officie** money paid by the Muslims of Jaffna with Van Rheede, Commissioner appointed by the Directors of the Company. Van Rheede who had wide experience in the south Indian region replied that the Company was obliged to trade with many lands ruled by Mohammedans and therefore must not follow offensive policies against Muslim inhabitants of Jaffna, and that the latter must not be taxed any more than the other inhabitants of Jaffna.[54]

It was not only the realisation that the Company had to live and transact business in a region where the Muslims were powerful that led to the softening of early guidelines of policy on Muslims. By 1670 the enthusiasm for the spread of Dutch Reformed Church Christianity had somewhat waned after tussle between Van Goens and Baldaeus over the position of the church organisation within the Company's administrative framework. The matter was clearly settled in favour of the civil authority and Baldaeus left the island in disgust.[55] This situation left the church organisation in the island very much dispirited and the early aggressive edge of proselytisation may be said to have been blunted as a result.

The consequent softening of the attitude of the Dutch authorities towards the Muslims may be seen in a report of the Governor of Colombo to Batavia in 1683. In this year the Dutch Reformed Church ministers in Jaffna requested the Governor's authority to forbid the Jaffna Muslims gathering in a private garden and reciting the Koran on four special days. The Governor turned down the request of the ministers on the ground that the Muslim communities of Galle and Jaffna were old ones and were not wont to inconvenience others; further the Governor pointed out, it was known that the Muslims did not make efforts to convert others.[56] Here we find the Dutch Governor protecting the rights of the Muslims against the wishes of the Reformed Church ministers.

There were setbacks to the smooth evolution of a more liberal attitude, resulting from the intervention of Dutch Reformed Church ministers. The

following instance illustrates one of these. Tobacco cultivation and trade brought in a great deal of cash to the Jaffna farmer in the 17th and 18th centuries. Most of this trade was with Malabar and the trade was carried by Muslim traders who came to Jaffna to buy the tobacco. At the turn of the 17th century a new mosque has been built for their convenience in Wannarponne. Initially this has been tolerated by the Dutch officialdom as the trade in tobacco was considered beneficial to the inhabitants of Jaffna and the Muslims who engaged in the carrying trade had to be treated with consideration. However, whether this mosque should be allowed to continue to exist, since it was so close to the fort and the Church was posed by the Commandeur of Jaffna, Swen Anderson, in 1718. The Commandeur's view was that the new mosque had to be broken down as its presence was an affront to the budding Dutch Reformed Church Christianity and could constitute an obstacle to its progress. The Commandeur's views were upheld by the Governor and Council of Colombo, and they ordered the new mosque to be broken down and to request the Muslims to use old mosque.(57)

In general the initial hostility to Islam was quite well worn by the middle of the 18th century. So much so thay by the time of Governor Falck (1765 – 85) the Dutch were even trying to find out the laws and customs of the Muslim community of the island and even trying to formulate a code for them.(58) It has been assumed so far that the effort made in the time of Governor Falck was the only one to find out the laws and customs of the Muslims of the island; this does not appear to be so. For we find in the 1790s an attempt made by the Commandeur of Jaffna to find out the laws and customs of the Muslims. In 1794 the Governor and Council of Colombo agreed to the arrangements made by Jaffna authorities for the translation of the laws of the Muslims "existing in the Arabic language with their priests"; the arrangement was first to translate them into Tamil and then into Dutch.(59) At first the Muslim leaders of Jaffna were accused for not co-operating with this effort for their own selfish reasons. Later it was found that the Dutch authorities in Jaffna had for some reason antagonised these men and consequently they had proved recalcitrant. These same leaders compiled a list of 250 laws based on the Koran and gave them to the Governor.(60)

The Diacony or the poor relief board of the church was an institution with close relations with the church. One way in which it financed its activities was by giving money on interest. Towards the end of the Dutch rule we find this institution lending money to members of the Muslim

community. Thus, among thirty one debtors to the **Diacony** of Galle a total of ten bear Muslim names.[61]

The changes in Dutch policy that become markedly visible from the mid 18th century was due to a combination of circumstances. The changing attitude in religious policy was already referred to. By the end of the 17th century the effort to establish a colony of settlers too had been given up.[62] By the same time some of the harshness of the Dutch trade monopoly was also beginning to be relaxed and from about the middle of the 18th century the Dutch were realising the futility of their effort to monopolise the entire trade of the island'.[63] During the course of the Kandyan – Dutch war of 1760 – 66 and after the mastery of the coastline of the island, that hitherto belonged to the Kandyans, further concessions were made in 1764 towards liberalising the island's trade that benefited south Indian and local Muslim traders.[64]

Meanwhile the early attitude of the Dutch that prohibited the grant of lands of Muslims and Chetties too had changed. Implementing this policy would have been difficult since these communities had the right to service tenure lands. However, in 1746 the official restrictions on the grant of new lands to Muslims and Chetties were removed.[65] In the period after 1765 when a policy of granting lands liberally for the cultivation of cash crops, was inaugurated Muslims seem to have availed themselves of the opportunities as lists of grantees of these lands indicate. Often it appears that it was the Muslim headmen who benefited from this policy. For instance, in a list submitted to the Governor's Council in 1788 we find the "Chief of Moors of Siyane, Hapitigam and Alutkuru korales" being granted 8 separate pieces of land.[66]

The war of 1760 – 66 proved to be an occasion when the Muslims could prove their loyalty to the Dutch. In 1760 a force consisting mainly of Muslims and Chetties was sent to Mahara, Mabole and Kelaniya in the Siyane korale by the Dutch to quell the rebellious subjects of the villages.[67] In the course of the war many Muslims acted as spies and couriers for the Dutch, while there was even a company of Muslim soldiers to assist the main Dutch armies. This company has continued well into the 1780s.[68]

Thus by the end of Dutch rule the Muslim community in Sri Lanka had managed to gain for itself a special position within the Company's policy despite the early hostility of the Dutch towards them. In the matter of religious liberties, office holding, trade as well as in renting they have been able to assert themselves and acquire a strong position. A detailed study of

this community's life in the extensive period covered in this paper has still to be made and the papers of the Dutch East India Company offer a rich source of evidence for this task.

Abbreviations used in the notes of this paper

C&C	Commandeur and Council
CJHSS	Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies
G&C	Governor and Council
GG&C	Governor General and Council
KA/VOC	Refers to the papers of the Dutch East India Company preserved in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague. Earlier numbering of these manuscript volumes started with the letters KA (for Koloniale Archief.) Recently these volumes have been renumbered beginning with letters VOC.
SLNA	Sri Lanka National Archives
Resolutions.	Minutes of the Governor General and Council of Colombo.

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52. **Memoir of Maetsuycker**, p. 19.

53. S. Pieters (tr.) **Instructions**, p. 64.

54. VOC 1469 fo 506. Points concerning Jaffnapatnam, From Blom– to Van Rheede, Nov. 29. 1690.

55. Arasaratnam, S., "Riverend Phillippus Baldaeus – His Pastoral Work in Ceylon" in **CJHSS, Vol. 3 No. 1** (1960) pp. 27–36.

56. VOC 1383 fos. 35–26 G&C Colombo to GG&C Batavia, June 22 1683.

57. VOC 1907 fo. 964. Points concerning the Commandement of Jaffnapatnam from Commandeur to Governor Rumph, February 19 1718.

58. Nadarajah, T. **The legal system of Ceylon in its historical setting.** (Leiden 1972) p. 14; also H.M.Z. Farouque, "Muslims Laws in Ceylon. An historical outline. " in M. Markhani (ed.) – **The Muslim Marriage Divorce Reports**, (Colombo 1972)

59. SLNA 1/1343 unpaginated G&C Colombo to C&C Jaffna May 24 1794.

60. SLNA 1/1343 unpaginated G&C to C&C Jaffna Sept. 10 1974. SLNA 1/1343 unpaginated G&C Colombo to C&C Jaffna Dec. 15 1794. Among the leaders of the Jaffna Muslims who sent the code of 250 laws are: Maalineinar Thambi Marikkar, Mahammadu Aspu – Marikkkar, Neina Pulle Marikkar, and Sultan Sikander Marikar.

61. VOC 3839 fos. 1572–76 Resolutions, August 31 1789.

62. Goonewardena, **op.cit.**

63. Arasaratnam S., "Dutch commercial policy and its effects on Indo – Ceylon Trade (1690–1750) **"Indian Economic and Social History Review"** Vol. IV No. 2 (1967) pp. 109–130.

64. KA 3003 fos. 1179–1181 Resolutions, October 12 1764.

65. KA 2554 fos. 160 – 172 G&C Colombo to GG&C Batavia. Dec. 31 1746.

66. VOC 3844 Unpaginated Resolutions, Nov. 11 1788.

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VI

MUSLIMS UNDER DUTCH RULE UP TO THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

K. W. Goonewardena

The Dutch East India Company's policies towards the Muslims in Sri Lanka, more particularly at the outset, were greatly influenced by attitudes and policies which they had already adopted in the so-called East Indies which was their earliest and most important field of activities. It was there too that they established their headquarters for the whole of Asia at Batavia (the name which they gave to Jakatra) on the island of Java.

To obtain a succinct idea of the policies and attitudes of the Dutch Company and its employees in the East Indies one could do no better than to note something of what C.R. Boxer, the distinguished historian of Portuguese and Dutch overseas enterprises in the 17th and 18th centuries, has to say on the subject. He says:

> "At first the Dutch made common cause with the Muslims of the Moluccas against the Portuguese, but no sooner were the Romanists expelled from the Spice Islands than the Calvinists took over their prejudices against the Muslims in general. Many of the Protestants already possessed such prejudices in full measure, as instanced by the senior Dutch merchant who made a habit of publicly relieving himself against the wall of a mosque at Japara in 1618. The Dutch had to contend with Muslim enemies or trade rivals in Java, in Sumatra, in the Moluccas and in Celebes; and this commercial rivalry strongly influenced their attitude to Muslims elsewhere. They originally legislated against the public performance of Islamic rites just as they did against those of the Church of Rome, wherever they thought they could enforce such legislation. On the other hand, they soon realised—

as their Portuguese predecessors had finally done – that they had no chance of converting Muslims to Christianity in any significant numbers."

He points out, however, that after the subjugation of Macassar in 1669, the Dutch authorities gradually became more tolerant of Islam and less rigorous than before in the treatment of Muslims under their authority, although the anti-Islamic laws continued to remain on the Batavia Statute-book.[1]

What is the situation that we encounter in Sri Lanka? There was the same hostility and prejudice against Islam and the Muslims that was noted in regard to the East Indies in the first half of the 17th century, although we encounter no counterpart of the **Opperkoopman** of Japara. There was also a sense of strong rivalry and hostility towards the Muslims as competitors in trade and commerce. All this was clearly reflected in official pronouncements as well as in legislation. Hostility on political grounds was also not entirely absent. The Dutch suspected that Muslim traders and seafarers operating from Sri Lanka were in league with actual or potential enemies of the Dutch such as the Theuver or Setupathi of Ramnad and agents of the Nayaks of Madura. Above all, they feared the sentiments of understanding and friendship which existed not only amongst Muslim traders but also amongst the Muslim populace as a whole towards the Kandyan Kingdom. We may also note that as in the Indonesian region, the V.O.C. (the Dutch Company) devoted hardly any time and effort to attempting conversion of Muslims to Calvinism. Experience in Indonesia had shown it to be futile. Whilst there was all this similarity between Dutch policies and attitudes in the Indonesian region in the first half of the 17th century and those in Sri Lanka, it is not so easy to discern in this Island the gradual increase in tolerance of Islam and the slow relaxation of rigorous measures that Boxer saw taking place in the East Indies as the century wore on. Though it is true that the Dutch (in common with other Europeans) were becoming more and more tolerant in religious matters (both in Europe and elsewhere) as the 17th and 18th centuries progressed, and this must have been reflected in their policies and attitudes in Sri Lanka too, the evidence indicates a much more complex situation here. In point of fact, traces – arguably, more than traces, perhaps – of the more tolerant postures associated with the last decades of the 17th century (and after) are to be found in Dutch activities in the Island in the 1640s and 1650s. Likewise, evidence of the harsher policies and attitudes associated with the early 17th century, are encountered here at the end of the century or even in the early 18th.

It is useful to keep these last observations in mind when we now turn to consider the various phases of Dutch policies and attitudes towards the Muslims in the period up to about the mid–18th century.[2] That is because these phases are demarcated on very broad lines, partly for the convenience of discussion and partly because some significant policies and events seem to mark them off from other phases; but within each phase evidence at least seemingly running counter to the general trend can be discerned. It may be noted in this connection that factors such as the logic of special circumstances, individual traits of character, the effects of bribery and corruption and other pressures and the ambitions of powerful individuals could provide the explanation for such contradictions or deviations.

We can roughly discern at least four phases in Dutch policies and attitudes in the period under consideration: (1) 1638 to 1658 (2) 1658 to say, 1680 (3) 1680 to 1714 and (4) 1714 to the mid-18th century.[3] During the first phase the Dutch were moving very cautiously as they were struggling to capture power from the Portuguese and were also getting embroiled too often in disputes and conflict with Rajasingha II of Kandy with whom they were supposed to be in alliance. In the early 1640s their hold in the Galle and Matara areas was particularly tenuous and they were, therefore, looking for elements of support from amongst the indigenous people against the Portuguese. The Muslims constituted one group which they had tried to attract to their side. With their control of the fortress of Galle and its harbour and their superior sea-power commanding the southern coasts, it was natural that the Muslims should turn favourably towards such overtures. Almost all of them being settled on the coast and so many of them depending directly or indirectly on maritime trade, they had virtually no alternative. However that may be, the Portuguese Captain Antonio de Amaral de Menezes operating in the Galle and Matara areas concluded that the Muslims were in league with the Dutch and in 1643 perpetrated what was the last massacre of Muslims in the Island by the Portuguese. He surrounded the bazaar area where almost all the Matara Muslims were resident and put to the sword some 200 to 300 adult males and youths and sent the women and younger children to Colombo as slaves. For several decades, if not for a longer period, the memory of this infamous deed (doubtless also recalling to mind earlier Portuguese massacres) must have made what they were going to suffer under Dutch rule more bearable than would otherwise has been the case.

It can be safely concluded that this event coupled with the obviously declining fortunes of the Portuguese led the remaining Muslims in the south-west

of the Island to throw in their lot with the Dutch. A high point in this development was the crossing over (from the Portuguese side) of the most reputed Moor of the time, by October 1652, when war was resumed between the two parties after a truce of about seven years. This was a man resident at Alutgama and commanding a large following, who, on account of his loyalty and great services to the Portuguese had been made a Mudaliyar by them. It was doubtless on account of some of those services that he had some years earlier suffered the loss of his hands and feet when captured by the Kandyans.[4] Now for having crossed over to their side bringing with him a couple of hundred adherents and for having given very shrewd and useful advice, the Dutch granted him the incomes from Beruwela and Gonapinuwela, and accorded the same kind of honoured status that he had had under the Portuguese.[5]

Hitherto we have been considering one aspect – a favourable one – of Dutch policies, and attitudes towards the Moors or Muslims during this first phase. There were other aspects which were by no means advantageous to Muslim interests. In a letter of 13 April 1647 to Governor-General and Council at Batavia, Governor Maetsuijeker expressed his fears that since the Dutch had expelled the Roman Catholic clergy from their territory most of the Catholics would go back to Buddhism and thus turn towards the King of Kandy. He was even more concerned that

> "others would join the Moorish perfidy, which is still worse, for experience teaches that these (moors) are most difficult to convert to the Christian religion, and in the propagation of their sect they strive very zealously."[6]

The hostility towards Islam is unmistakable in these words as also a somewhat vaguely articulated fear that the spread of that religion posed a political threat too. These sentiments as well as a desire to help Dutch colonists had already led him to issue a **placaat** a few months earlier restricting the residence of the Muslims to the town limits of Galle and prohibiting them from travelling inland to peddle their wares and collecting local produce. The Muslims complained so much about the latter prohibition as affecting their livelihood that the Governor felt compelled to grant them a concession: they could travel to the interior after obtaining special permits from the Secretary of the Galle Council or the corporal in charge at Weligama.[7]

The overseas trade of the Muslims he considered to be harmful to Dutch interests even more than the internal trade. By a letter of 28 Feb. 1648 followed up by another of 17 May 1648 he pointed out to the Batavian Government that Muslims and also some other non-Christian traders were making very attractive profits by the sale of Sri Lankan arecanut on the Coromandel coast and Coromandel textiles in Sri Lanka.

These were profits that should accrue to the Company or its colonists. But as the Muslims had been engaged in this trade from olden times, he felt that they could not be excluded from it immediately, but could be pushed out gradually. If the Company or the Dutch colonists could engross the arecanut trade Maetsuijeker believed that the Muslims would find the textile trade alone unattractive. Batavia was in full agreement with all these ideas.(8)

Maetsuijeker's successor, Jacob van Kittensteijn, continued the former's policies. He renewed the **placaat** restricting the freedom of settlement and allowed travel only on a permit system as before. As for trade, he wished to go further than his predecessor. He wished to create an absolute monopoly for the Dutch over the arecanut trade, and to hold up the textiles of the Muslim merchants at the customs house until the Dutch had sold theirs.(9) The fact was that although Maetsuijeker had thought that the Dutch could operate cheaper than the Muslim merchants and thereby take over the cloth and arecanut trades the latter had more than maintained their position. The Batavian Council, however, did not approve of Kittensteijn's drastic proposal, and reiterated a policy of gradual elimination of the Muslim traders. In one respect, (and a new one at that) however, they wished to go even further. If there were not enough lands for distribution among the Dutch colonists, he was told that "the heathen and Moors must under all circumstances, give up their lands for Netherlanders."(10)

After Kittensteijn's death in 1653 the policy of keeping the Muslims in check had not been maintained by the new Governor Adriaen van der Meijden – if we are to believe his critic Rijokloff van Goens, who, first as Admiral, Commissioner and Superintendent of the Company's possessions in Sri Lanka and India, and later on as Governor, dominated much of the affairs of the Island for most of the twenty years or so from about 1656. According to Van Goens that "evil brood" (the Muslims) had been allowed to spread out all over Dutch territory and to gain possession of the best lands in and around Galle besides obtaining on lease from

the Company the revenues of the principal villages; they had also got hold of some Christian slaves and many Sinhalese women. He was as indignant to find that they were "navigating to all places and bringing by sea all that Ceylon needed", and had engrossed the internal trade especially in arecanut to the utter detriment of the Dutch colonists and the V.O.C. as a whole."[11]

It is highly probable that Van Goens was in characteristic fashion exaggerating the position in order to show up Van der Meijden in a bad light and thereby get him removed from the Governorship if possible. At the same time there is reason to believe that there was a substantial element of truth in the criticisms. However that may be, Van Goens began to play an increasingly active role in the affairs of the Island after the final expulsion of the Portuguese with the capture of Jaffna in June 1658. He in effect ushered in the second phase (1658 to 1680) of Dutch policy towards the Muslims.

Judging by the official pronouncements and legislation, this phase was a more hostile and harsh one than before. With the Portuguese eliminated from the reckoning, the Dutch as a whole felt that they could at last follow more uncompromising and authoritarian policies towards the indigenous inhabitants. Van Goens held this view to a marked degree and it was clearly reflected in his statements and actions.

In his instructions dated 31 October 1658 to the newly-appointed **Commandeur** of Jaffna, Anthonij Paviljoen, he said that steps should be taken to see that this "evil sect" (the Muslims) does not expand, "but rather that they remained suppressed."[12] Moreover, although apparently following an existing privilege a certain amount of public worship appears to have been permitted in Jaffna, that was withdrawn - for the whole Island – not long afterwards.[13]

Greater elaboration of his ideas, actions and policies was made in his letter of 13 May 1659 to his superiors at Batavia. He described the steps that were being taken to redress the irregularities that had crept in after Kittensteijn's Governorship. He had also ordered a registration of all the Muslims in Dutch territory and an inventory of their houses, lands, slaves and other possessions. As it had been estimated that there would be more than 1600 households, with very many children, he was considering expelling all those whom he considered to be more than a manageable number or at least all those who had taken up residence in the island

in contravention of the **placaats** during the past six years. In the alternative he could impose a poll-tax on them. However, he added, he would not take any of these drastic steps without obtaining the prior consent of Batavia.

As if to justify some pretty drastic steps which he had already taken, or contemplated taking soon, all subject to Batavian approval, he not only gave the estimate of the large number of Muslim households which we have already noted but also said that he had received reports that a large number of Sinhalese had already become Muslims. He added that if that were the case the Dutch would have to face in course of time a greater evil in the Island than at present. It may be noted in this connection that the threat of mass conversion of the Sinhalese to Islam was a bogey which the Dutch often conjured up in order to advocate or justify discriminatory actions against the Muslims. In the present instance Van Goens himself admitted that he had not yet received any evidence of the alleged conversions.

Anyway, having sounded the necessary alarm, Van Goens indicated some of the very severe and not so severe measures he had taken or was about to take. The crafts of tailoring and shoe-making in which hitherto only the Muslims appear to have been engaged he had made into monopoly crafts for the burghers or Dutch colonists at Galle and he intended doing the same in Colombo. He also intended prohibiting the Muslims from buying any arecanut or exporting any of it without first obtaining permission from the Government. Moreover he was going to impose regular compulsory service on behalf of the Company in such work as clearing woods and pathways for no payment but only the provision of some rice. Finally he intended proclaiming by **placaat** that any Muslim who slept with a heathen Sinhalese woman would be punished with banishment and confiscation of property, but for sleeping with a Christian Sinhalese woman, the death penalty would be imposed in accordance with the Batavian ordinances.(14)

The year 1659 in particular, and subsequent years to a lesser extent, saw a spate of proclamations and other regulatory actions against the Muslims (and in some cases, against other non-Christians too). Only Christians could be butchers and bakers. If Muslims wished to practise their profession as tailors, they could do so only as wage-earners under the Dutch colonists. Muslims were also elbowed out of the retail trade in

foodstuffs and coarse textiles. No overseas trade could be undertaken unless they took in Dutch colonists as shareholders. Only Christians could participate in the salt trade. Foreign Muslims from Bengal and the Coromandel coast who brought textiles had not only to pay double the duty paid by the colonists but had also to sell them wholesale to the latter, who were given the retail monopoly. Similarly whilst the colonists could bring in rice duty-free from overseas, Muslim merchants had to pay 5% duty and were prevented from engaging in its retail. Although some of the discriminatory legislation regarding trade applied at the outset only to the port of Colombo, it was later extended also to Galle which had a much larger Muslim population and where, therefore, greater problems in implementation had been feared.(15)

Whilst it is apparent that some of these restrictions and regulations were not always strictly enforced or were allowed to lapse, some of the most rigorous were implemented, at least in part. For instance, after the publication of the **placaat** against fornication with Christian women, some Muslims were apprehended for the offence, convicted on their own confession and sentenced to death. But on the supplications of some of the principal indigenous inhabitants and of a Dutch predicant, it was decided to pardon the offenders. The crucial factor motivating the clergyman and the authorities in this matter had in all probability been the inclination shown by the convicted men to become Christians.(16)

There is evidence also to show that in some areas, Van Goens was following rather uncertain and seemingly illogical policies. To prevent the Muslims from spreading themselves and their influence in the inland areas he had decided in 1659 to confine their residence to the town limits of Galle, Weligama, and Matara, it being understood, however, from the time of Maetsuijeker that for security reasons they should not be permitted residence within the fortified places. On 11th June 1660 Van Goens decided in Council that in future no houses or other immovable property should be sold to moors outside the **stad** (fortified town) of Colombo but that they should be granted that facility within the **stad** in a discrete measure. Thus it may be from around this time that many Muslims were able to take up residence even within the fortified town of Galle. The possibilities of closer contacts with some elements of Dutch officialdom and the consequent possibilities for friendlier relationships and for transactions which subverted anti-Muslim laws and regulations can be imagined.(17) On the other hand we find Van Goens concerned in 1670 that there should be so many Muslims living around Colombo and ordering

them, therefore, to take up residence in the area between Alutgama and Galle, where, in point of fact, there were already large concentrations of them.[18]

One final point remains to be noted.. Although Van Goens had ushered in much more hostile and discriminatory policies and attitudes towards the Muslims, evidence of different attitudes and policies can also be noted in this period. When he sent two members of his Council on a mission to the East coast in 1666 he instructed them **inter alia** to find out particulars about the trade that was being carried out in Batticaloa (which was then under Rajasingha's control). For that purpose, he said, he was giving them "two of our oldest and most trusted moors to go on land there" and gather information.[19] In the following year again we find two men being sent out to spy on Batticaloa.

These two also appear to have been Moors.[20] In that same year a wealthy Muslim of Galle who had violated overseas trade laws got away without any punishment. This man, Cheeuwdie Caddij [Seyyadu Kadir?] it is instinctive to note, was a member of the Civil Court of Galle who had also taken on lease the payment of the poll-tax of the Galle Muslims.[21] The concern of Van Goens and later on of his son, who succeeded him as Governor, to see that the Bengal Muslims, who brought rice to the Island and purchased elephants in return, were given sufficient encouragement because their trade was beneficial to the Company is yet another example of the ambivalent attitudes that the Dutch had to adopt even in the periods of greatest hostility towards Muslims.[22]

The third phase in Dutch policies and attitudes towards Muslims may be said to commence with the new Governor, Laurence Pijl, in around 1680. The Van Goens era which had begun in the mid-fifties of the century ended with the virtual recall of the son from the Governorship of the Island and a majority in the Batavian Council turning against the father's Governor-Generalship. This development signalled a reversal or modification of many policies hitherto followed in Sri Lanka and the policy towards the Muslims was one of them.

Although there was always a latent hostility and prejudice against Muslims whether at the headquarters in Batavia or amongst Pijl and his Councillors in Colombo, there is discernible a more accommodating, pragmatic, and open attitude towards the problem. A good illustration of this is provided by the refusal of Pijl and his Council, and the reasons given for the refusal to take action against what the Dutch Predikants

considered to be scandalous and intolerable activities of the Muslims. In their letter of 22nd June 1683 to the Batavian authorities, they explained:

> "The request of the Jaffna brethren Predikants relating to the Moors cannot be granted, because they do not use any outward ceremonies, and also have no public places in Jaffna for it. The Moors on this side (Colombo) and in Galle, as long-standing inhabitants, have been allowed – by shutting one's eyes to it – to assemble together on their appointed feast-days in a shed which they have in one of their gardens and to listen to their Alkoran being read. This gives no offence to anyone. Futhermore, we have never heard that any Christians or Sinhalese have gone over to their religion."(23)

While this statement reflected an accommodating and pragmatic attitude, it was strictly speaking not quite accurate on one point; Pijl had indeed heard of a case of a Christian who had allegedly been converted to Islam barely seven months before the above letter to Batavia. It is possible though that Pijl ignored it in his letter because the alleged convert was not a native of the Island. The alleged incident and the circumstances attending it are so interesting and also – whatever its truth – so significant for what was believed to be within the realms of possibility at that time, that it is worth giving in Pijl's own words:

> "People say – and the Predicant has also complained – that a Christian who had come there (Batticaloa) with the (Dutch) ship from Siam had been converted to the Moors' religion, and publicly circumcised. And in order to show all the better to the whole world their triumph in having converted a Christian to their religion, they are said to have obtained a Persian horse from the aforesaid Ensign, (Wijtnauw who was being accused of involvement in illegal trading activity) placed the repudiator (of God) on it, and taken him round (in triumph). If it has so happened, it merits no little punishment ..... Order the fiscal to make careful inquiry into this matter."(24)

During this period there are to be found several instances of land grants to Muslims by Dutch officials themselves, although according to the **placaats** no Muslim could possess lands and other immovable property. On the 1st January 1682 we find the Dutch **Onderkoopman** (Junior Merchant) Alexander Bergaigne gifting a paddy land to the Headman of the Galle Moors, Lebbe Neijna Marcair.(25) If that could be considered a private gift

and not an official act, we encounter an example of the latter some five years later. The Special Commissioner, Hendrik Adriaan van (Van) Reede, who had been entrusted with, amongst other things, the eradication of all corruption and irregularities in all Dutch possessions and establishments to the West of the East Indies, asked Governor Pijl by letter of 23rd November 1687 to grant a coconut property to the Moor Cheeude Caddi (Seyyadu Kadir) in the Kalutara district to compensate for one which he had lost to the Company through lack of a proper title. Van Reede explained that this person was helping him greatly in the conduct of his commission.[26] In fact, the frequent violation of the **placaat** referred to was cited in 1695 by the Galle **Commandeur,** Carel Bolner, when he recommended the request for a land grant made by the Moor Headman of Weligama.[27] The position is further highlighted when we note that at the end of the century the Chief Headman of the Moors at Galle possessed around two dozen gardens and paddy fields, and there were several other Muslims who had only slightly less.[28]

It is also relevant to note that apart from the offices of Headman or Vidana over their people held by the principal Muslims, there were other Muslims in the direct employ of the Dutch administration. Whilst we have such evidence for the year 1681, there is no doubt that such employment had been given in earlier years,[29] probably from the inception of Dutch rule. The incidence of such cases was very likely higher after 1680. In 1681 there was a Muslim interpreter in Jaffna and a shroff who very probably was also a Muslim. In that year in Galle there were 58 employees who were lumped together as "Moors and Sinhalese"; at Matara there was a Muslim money teller; and at Mannar a Muslim functioning as physician to the Company's slaves.[30] Between 1685 and 1690 the Matara Dissawe de Vos employed a Muslim; Neijnde Oedeaar, as an official scribe and utilised him and the Moor Headman of Weligama for the pursuit of his illicit trade in rice and textiles at the expense of the Company's store-houses.[31]

In matters of trade too various bits of evidence suggest a more accommodating attitude towards the Muslims during this period. For instance, in 1705, when two Moors and a Dutch colonist together had brought some packs of textiles to Galle in contravention of the proclamations, Governor Simons and Council decided not to confiscate them but merely to levy a 20% toll. Similarly, instead of preventing the Muslims from retailing cloth as before, we not only find about a dozen Muslims in 1706 virtually

controlling textile trade in Galle Bazaar, but even being able to persuade the Galle Commandeur and his Council to proclaim penalties against anyone who engaged in textile sales outside the bazaar.[32]

Lest all this creates the impression that it was all smooth sailing for the Muslim community during this period, we have also to note some evidence to the contrary. The Muslims continued to remain subject to discriminatory legislation against non Christians in religious as well as economic affairs. In the Judicial sphere, their evidence, along with that of Buddhists and Hindus, remained inadmissible or at best was considered to be of limited validity, in accordance with the provision of the Batavia Statutes.[33] On the 20th May 1697 a new **placaat** was issued prohibiting the Company's subjects from going to the Kandyan country for the purchase of food provisions or any other goods.[34] This decree (which was ratified by Batavia the following year adversely affected the Muslims rather than other groups. In September 1705 the Colombo Muslims (along with Chetties and Paravas) found themselves inflicted with a new servitude imposed by the Government: that of fetching timber and firewood for the Company from woods several miles away from Colombo.[35] All these measures should cause no surprise when we note that, Pijl reflected a persisting Dutch attitude which was always in the background, when he declared that "the moorish brood is entirely harmful to the Company on Ceylon, and more especially in Kandy.[36]

The demarcation of the next phase in Dutch policies and attitudes was dictated by one single Governor's actions around the year 1714. But for those actions the phase which commenced in 1680 could very well have run on to nearly the mid 18th century. What he did, constituted a radical break with the conventions, understandings and accommodations that had developed with regard to Dutch policies and attitude towards the Muslims. Although, as we have already noted, no Muslim could possess immovable property in the Island in terms of the legislation that had been promulgated by the Dutch, the highest officials had ignored that legislation and connived at Muslim possession of land or even gone to the extent of making land grants to Muslims. In point of fact, the Supreme Government in Batavia itself had virtually accepted this position in 1700.[37] But Governor Hendrick Becker declared that possession of immovable property by the Muslims in Dutch territory was illegal according to the **placaats** and that he was therefore confiscating them all for the benefit of the Company. Thereafter, he put up these lands for public auction to the highest bidder.

Becker did everything possible to prevent the Muslims from making any effective protest. He went to the extent of secretly ordering the provisional chief of the Galle Commandment (where most of the confiscated lands were) not to give any permission to any Moors to go over to Colombo to make representations. Any who tried to do so without permission were to be put into chains. He even forbade the Galle authorities to entertain any complaints from Moors relating to their confiscated lands.[38] The most obvious reason for his actions appears to have been the desire to obtain additional revenues from his land sales so that he could boast of a surplus budget which, in turn, would increase his stock with the Directors of the Company. It must be remembered that whilst his sequestration and sale of lands belonging to Muslims was the most spectacular of all, he confiscated many other lands belonging to Sinhalese and Tamils on the flimsiest of pretexts.

The Period after Becker's departure from the Island (which was in December 1716) was one in which the Muslims were trying to recover from the lamentable state into which they had been thrown by his actions. In this they were aided to some extent by the recognition of the injustice that had been done to them which was pointed out by Becker's immediate successor, Isaac Augustijn Rumpf, and readily accepted by the Batavian authorities, who had generally been critical of Becker's activities. Even the Directors of the Company ultimately recognised this fact although their laudatory appreciation of the unholy profits that Becker had been providing them with had prevented Batavia from checking his arbitrary actions when they were first noticed. Recognition of the injustice that had been done to the Muslims did not mean that the sequestrated and auctioned lands were restored to them or that alternative compensation was paid to them. It probably led only to a greater readiness to overlook certain fresh "illegal" transactions and a possible mitigation of rigour in some other areas.

That the Muslims were ultimately able to get back much of their lost lands must have been partly due to such attitudes and partly due to the enterprise of the Muslims themselves. But not least, it appears to have been due to collusion between their Sinhalese (and may be, some Dutch and Tamil) friends and themselves. Copies of at least three legal documents covering some fifteen lands suggest that many Muslims got their Sinhalese friends to buy their lands at Becker's auctions and to transfer them back at a later date in various guises - as mortgages, land sales etc. - when it was considered safe to do so.

First of all, in March 1716 we encounter a mortgage of some thirteen lands, bought by one Jamburagodde Vidane "at the public moor auctions," to Segoe Paridoe Lebbe Marcair for 150 Rds. This amount is so ridiculously low in the context of land prices at that time, that it appears to have been set down merely to give a semblance of legality to the entire transaction. This suspicion is confirmed when we find it laid down that if this loan was not repaid within one year Segoepariedoe "could deal with the said lands as he pleases".[39] The second document dated 11th June 1726 is a mortgage of a land by one Hettimulle Appuhamy, whose father, Abeysekera Kulatunge Mudaliyar had bought it "at a certain auction". The loan obtained is once again a very low one, and quite ridiculous for a Mudaliyar's son. Though no time period for repayment is mentioned, the land is handed over straightaway to Magoedoe Kandoe Natjile, widow of Casie Lebbe Markan, from whom the "loan" had been received.[40] The third document leaves no doubt as to much of what happened at the auction of "Moor lands". It is dated 4th November 1730. In it S. P. L. M. Kasie Lebbe Markair of Galle explains that this land at Weligama had "been bought by Navaratne Mudaliyar at the auction of the sale of Moor lands **at my father's request** for 14Rds." – a very low figure, once again. Lebbe Markair goes on to say that "we [his father and himself] have possessed that land peacefully and without hindrance". He adds that he will hand over the deed which is in the name of Navaratne Mudaliyar along with the land to Siddilebbe Markair in settlement of a debt owed by his father to the said Siddilebbe.[41]

As stated earlier, but for Becker's arbitrary and unscrupulous actions there would have been little to distinguish the decades after 1714 from those before, in respect of Dutch policies and attitudes.

On grounds of religion we notice an example of clerical agitation similar to that we have seen in the time of Governor Pijl. The Predicants of Jaffna commenced an agitation against two mosques at Vannarponnai and on the representations made by the **Commandeur** of Jaffna Governor Rumpf and his Council considered the problem and first went on record with a decision to demolish them. It may have been a gesture meant to appease the Directors of the Company who were usually more unbending in matters of religion and more inclined to listen to the Predicants than the Batavian authorities. However, that may be, the mosques were not destroyed even after one year of the decision and on 11th March 1719 we find Rumpf and Council explaining to the Governor-General and Council why they later decided not to carry it out at least for the time being. These mosques had

been built primarily for worship by the merchants, who came from the Coromandel coast to buy elephants, and from Kollam to buy tobacco, and if they were demolished the profitable trade in these two articles was likely to be adversely affected. Therefore, having revised their decision they had earnestly admonished the **Predicants** "to work ceaselessly and zealously for the conversion and enlightenment of our own subjects who could be and ought to be turned away from those mosques".[42]

An example of a valuable land grant from the Galle Commandeur to the Headman of the Moors at Galle in June 1739 shows a continuation of earlier policies.[43]

The appointment of Muslim Headmen, Vidanes and Pedies (in the Batticaloa area) was not only continued but Van Imhoff created new posts of "Moor Commissioners" at Matara in 1737.[44] Similarly the employment in the Company's subordinate service of Muslims in such positions as shroffs, money tellers, interpreters and physicians was maintained, if not expanded. The collection of arecanut which the Dutch had earlier tried to limit to Company's officials or Dutch colonists is found entrusted to the Moor Headmen in 1739.

On the other hand, discrimination on religious grounds was continued as before (with a new tax imposed for those who celebrated their marriages with unusual pomp),[45] their movement into the interior of the country was as severely controlled and compulsory services on behalf of the Company maintained and even extended. The Headmen of the Moors were threatened that in case they did not provide sufficient men to work on loading and unloading of ships at Galle, they would not only be imprisoned but even run the risk of being themselves set to work in chains.[46]

Thus in theory at least the lot of the Muslims appeared to be much the same as before, except that in the mid 18th century their right to own land was at last getting legalised.[47]

During the century or so which we have so briefly surveyed according to the evidence encountered, we find that the Muslims occupied the lowest position in the religious hierarchy set up by the Dutch. At the top were the Protestants, next came the Roman Catholics; thereafter, the Buddhists and Hindus, and, last of all the Muslims. Nevertheless, the Muslims were not and could not be such a despised lot in many other respects. Many of their co-religionists arriving in the Island from time to time were treated

with courtesy and sometimes with deference by the Dutch. The Muslim traders from the Maldives, from Malabar and Coromandel and from Bengal were generally welcomed by the Company. They were particularly polite to the merchants from the Golconda region who came to buy elephants and even more so to the Bengal merchants, who often came for the same reason as well as for arecanut, bringing with them the much-needed rice and other food provisions as well as textiles (over which the Dutch had mixed feelings). They took particular care not to offend the Bengal merchants as they feared retaliatory action from the Mughal Nawabs who often had a pecuniary interest in the cargoes of the Bengal vessels.

The Muslims in the Island benefited also from the reflected glory of the Javanese state exiles – ex-sultans, princes and chiefs who were often treated with much respect and consideration by the Dutch. There were also many Indonesian mercenaries serving in the Island throughout this century, and they too enjoyed no mean position in Dutch service.

Perhaps more than all this, the position of the Muslims in Dutch territory benefited – like that of other indigenous groups – from the existence of the Kingdom of Kandy. The contrast in the treatment of Muslims in the Sinhalese kingdom with that in Dutch territory posed a serious problem to the Dutch, and no doubt it held in some check any tendency to take stronger action against Muslim interests.

In Kandy, the Muslims enjoyed complete religious freedom, with mosques and priests functioning in many parts of the kingdom including one Muslim priest supported out of the revenues of a Buddhist temple.[48] There were several thousand Muslims, particularly in the East Coast, whose ancestors had been welcomed as refugees escaping from the clutches of the Portuguese. The Dutch saw Muslims in the service of Rajasinha II and his successors holding important offices, serving in the King's armies, functioning as court physicians and traders and merchants and even engaged in diplomatic activities on behalf of the kingdom.

As examples of some of the above, we can note references to Muslims fighting in the king's armies against the Dutch in 1675[49] and to Sultan Coettineynde, a court physician whom Rajasingha II sent to treat the Dutch ambassador Mierop.[50] In the reign of Wimaladharmasuriya II the Dutch were at one time much concerned about the trading activities on behalf of the king of a Muslim of Puttalam named Suleiman.[51] But in the following reign and right up to the time of Kirti Sri Rajasingha, the Muslim

merchant and diplomat **par excellence** was the famous Maula Auwekker (Abubacker) Muhandiram. During the reign of the fun-loving Narendrasinha, Maula Muhandiram apart from conducting trading activity, also brought musicians and dancing girls for the court[52] During Sri Vijaya Rajasingha's reign he seems to have thrown the Dutch off their guard by negotiating with them for selling Kandyan produce whilst conducting trade with South Indian ports.[53] In the crisis times of Kirti Sri's rule his concentration appears to have been more on diplomatic activity to counter the threats arising from Dutch policies.[54]

Apart from the activities of Muslims settled in the Kingdom of Kandy, the Dutch were extremely concerned about the correspondence, visits, and connections of Muslims in their territory with that kingdom. The restrictions on the movements of Muslims (as well as of others) were based on their fear that all these people were too well disposed towards the King and his subjects, and that their contacts with Kandy could only be to the detriment of the Company. Despite the restrictions, many made the journey to Kandy and back unobserved. When, however, one got caught like the physician Cata Lebbe in 1744 they had to pardon him on the intercession of Kandyan ministers,[55] just as they had often to do in the case of Muslim vessels caught breaking the Dutch blockade, as happened in that very year 1744.[56]

An attempt had indeed been made in the 1680s to create suspicion in the minds of the King and his people and thereby, if possible, to get at least the Muslim traders expelled from the kingdom. It was believed that the Muslims were the culprits who induced the King to demand the opening of the harbours. The Special Commissioner Van Reede had put the idea to Governor Pijl that by appropriate propaganda the Kandyans could be made to be hostile to the Muslims. A determined attempt was made by conveying to the chiefs, and also getting Dutch spies to circulate, the idea that all the Muslims, especially those who had overseas contacts were conspiring with the Mughals and at the opportune moment they would try to overthrow the King and establish a Muslim kingdom. But the Governor had ultimately to admit failure saying that the effort had been "like knocking at a deaf man's door."[57] When four decades later Governor Van Imhoff proposed that the Nayakkars could be overthrown by creating anti-Tamil sentiment in Kandy, the Batavian authorities saw little chance of success in view of these experiences of the 1680s.

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Notes

1. C. R. Boxer, **The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800** (Lond. 1965) pp. 142-43.

2. For a sketch of the earlier history see K. W. Goonewardena, " Some Notes on the History of the Muslims in Ceylon before the British Occupation", **University of Ceylon Muslim Majlis** (hereafter, "Some Notes ...2) (Colombo 1960) pp. 82-91.

3. Needless to say the terminal date of a particular phase is given as the commencing date of the next phase in order to emphasize the generally rough and real nature of the compartmentalization.

4. See K. W. Goonewardena, **The Foundation of Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1638-1658** (Amsterdam 1958) pp. 155-56.

5. **Sri Lanka National Archives** (hereafter **SLNA**) 1/3224 fo. 91.

6. **Koloniaal Archief** of the Algemeen Rijksarchief at the Hague (hereafter **K.A.**) 1065 fos. 82-83.

7. **SLNA** 3 fo. 26. It may be noted that this attitude had been to some extent anticipated by his predecessor, Jan Thijssen, nearly two years earlier. See the reference to Thijssen's letters of Aug./Sep. 1645 in **Degh-Register Gehouden int Casteel Batavia**, ed. J.A. van der Chijs and others. (Batavia/Hague 1888–1904) Entry of 10 Nov. 1645, pp. 313 ff.

8. See on the above **SLNA** 1/3 fo. 142, **KA** 1067 fo. 159 and Governor–General and Council (hereafter GG&C) to Maet., 16 Sep. 1648 KA 775 p. 298; **Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker, 1650,** Trans E. Reimers (Col. 1927) p. 28. For further elaboration see K. W. Goonewardena, " A New Netherlands in Ceylon-Dutch Attempts to found a Colony in Ceylon", (hereafter "A New Netherlands") **The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies,** Vol. 2 No. 2 (July 1959) pp. 221–222.

9. Kitt. to GG&C 6 Nov. 1650 **KA** 1070 fos. 660-61.

10. GG&C. to Kitt. & C., 3 July 1651 & 19 July 1651 **KA** 778 pp. 236-37 and p. 272 respectively.

11. V. Goens to GG&C. 13 May 1659, **KA** 1121 fos, 106-07.

12. **KA** 1121 fo. 206.

13. **Memoirs of Ryckloff Van Goens - (Memoir to Jacob Hustaert, 26 Dec. 1663),** Trans. E. Reimers (Colombo 1932) p. 76.

14. **KA** 1121 fos. 106-08 **Cf.** also **SLNA** 1/3224 fo. 123.

15 On the above see "A New Netherlands" pp. 227-28.

16. **KA** 1120 fo. 142.

17. On the above see. V. Goens to GG&C., 21 Nov. 1659 **KA** 1120 fo. 142 and Colombo Council Resolutions of 11 June 1660, **SLNA** 1/3224 fo. 126.

18. One cannot help, but recall Queyroz's lament about the undesirable friendships between some Portuguese officials and some Muslims within Colombo around 1625. See **The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon** Trans. Fr. S. G. Perera (Col. 1935) pp. 743-45 and "Some Notes....." p. 83

19. **Memorie** for Lucas van der Dussen and Isaack de St. Martin, 1st July 1666. **KA** 1147 fo. 458.

20. "Diary.....of Galle, 1667", **SLNA** 1/5973 fos. 319-20.

21. **Ibid.** fos. 374-75 and fo. 128 and fos. 225-26.

22. Van Goens to the **Heeren XVII,** 25 Jan. 1668. **KA** 1152 fos. 273-74 and Van Goens Junior to GG&c., 17 April 1679 fos. 30-31.

23. **KA** 1262 fo. 26. It is important to note that the situations referred to must have been long-standing ones, stemming from the earliest days of Dutch rule. They point to certain realities that the Dutch had to take note of. Batavia had in fact received a complaint from a clergyman as early as February 1646 saying that the Muslims were exercising their religious practices outside the fortress of Galle, publicly.

24. **Memoire** and Orders of Pijl to B. Ruhe & C., 11 Nov. 1682, **KA** 1268 fo.2306.

25. **SLNA** 1/6104 fo. 3.

26. **SLNA** 1/4951 pp. 111-12.

27. Report of Bolner to Governor Thomas Van Rhee, 29 Nov. 1695 **KA** 1471 fo. 171.

28. **SLNA** 1/6104 fos. 1–2 and **passim.**

29. For instance, in Kalutara fort we meet a moor physician employed by the Dutch in 1678. **KA** 1240 fo. 2528.

30. **Rolle der Inlandtse Dienaren,** ult: Feb: 1681 **KA** 1259 fos. 2052-53.

31. **Vertoog** of Commander de Heijde, 21 May 1691, **KA** 1409 fos. 205-09.

32. Gov. Simons & C. to GG&C., 11 March 1705, **KA** 1605 fo. 208-09; Galle Council Resolution, 10 Dec. 1706, **SLNA** 1/5034 unpaginated.

33. **cf.** Van Rhee & C. to GG&C., 12 Dec. 1693, **KA** 1448 fo. 347.

34. **Hooge Regeering** 505 **Verbaal** fo. 210.

35. Simons & C. to GG&C., 22 Oct. 1705, **KA** 1605 fo. 380.

36. Pijl & C. to Van Reede, 16 May 1688, **SLNA** 1/4953 fo. 403.

37. See **Demonstratie.....** of 20 Oct. 1719, **KA** 1814 fo. 1097.

38. Secret letter of Gov. Becker to provisional **Gesaghabber** ..... 21 April 1716 **KA** 1814 fos: 1220, 1221-23.

39. **SLNA** 1/5957 unpag.

40. **SLNA** 1/5958 unpag.

41. **SLNA** 1/5959 unpag. Of course not every Muslim had friends or sympathisers who could help in that manner. There is evidence that some Sinhalese bought land for keeps at these auctions.

42. **VOC** (This is the new abbreviation for **KA** documents after a re-classification at the Hague Archives whereby the figures do not correspond to the old numbers) 1927 fo. 379: **cf** also. **KA** 1807 fo: 2225 and **KA** 1824 fos. 687-88.

43. **SLNA** 1/5956 unpag.

44. **SLNA** 1/5957 unpag.

45. **VOC** 2456 p. 2085-86.

46. **SLNA** 1/57 fo. 153.

47. See in this connection the Colombo Council Resolutions in **SLNA** 1/2408.

48. See "Some Notes....." p. 91 and, for the position of Muslims in the earlier Sinhalese kingdoms, pp. 82-86.

49. Van Goens de Jonge to GG&C., 11 Oct. 1675.

50. Report of Jayasundera Appuhamy, ... 1685 **KA** 1299 fo. 318.

51. See **SLNA** 1/4953 fo. 466 and 1/3257 unpag.

52. **SLNA** 1/71 p. 14 ff.; **KA** 2251 fo. 179.

53. **SLNA** 1/3261 pp. 80-81, 92-96 **et passim.**

54. **See J; H. O. Paulusz, Secret Minutes of the Dutch Political Council, 1762** (Col. 1954) p. 68.

55. **SLNA** 1/334 unpag.

56. **Ibid.**

57. Pijl to Van Reede, 14 Nov. 1689. **SLNA** 1/4953 fo. 422.

VII

THE MUSLIMS IN THE KANDYAN KINGDOM (c1600–1815) A STUDY OF ETHNIC INTEGRATION

Lorna Dewaraja

"Islam and Hinduism existed side by side with Buddhism and Tamils and Hindus enjoyed equal rights with the Sinhalese as the King's subjects. Some Muslims and Tamils served in the King's administration in high positions and were used on important missions to the Dutch and to Indian kings. Rajasingha (1635–87) seems to have been in a fit position to unite all races and religions of the country under his leadership with the result that he was served equally by all peoples without distinction. In this he was following the Hindu and Buddhist ideal of monarchy." S. Arasaratnam. **Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1658–1687,** Netherlands 1958.

The Infiltration of the Muslims into the Kandyan Kingdom.

At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese to the East, the trade of the Asian seas was in Muslim hands, from the Arabian seas to China. Enjoying a virtual monopoly of trade as well as the favour and patronage of the Muslim states, these traders were peaceably disposed, setting about their business on cordial terms with those concerned. The coastline of Ceylon[1] in common with the Gujerat, Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal were thriving areas of Muslim maritime activity with sizeable Muslim populations whose interests were strongly integrated with those of the local rulers.

In the coastal towns of Ceylon, mainly in Kalpitiya, Puttalam, Salavata Kammala, Negombo, Colombo, Kalutara, Beruwala and Galle, the Muslims were a dominant commercial presence. They were a large and populous collection of scattered communities, with much local influence in places

of their location, but loosely strung and not forming a power complex. They won the confidence of the rulers who desired the additional revenue from trade especially after the abandonment of the great rice yielding plains of the North where the grain tax formed the principal source of state income.

The appearance of the Portuguese in the Eastern waters transformed this scenario. In the spheres of religion, politics and commerce, the Portuguese and Arabs were bitter rivals and the latter sensed that their era of unrivalled trade supremacy was over. Once Portuguese power was established in the coastal areas of the island, they restricted the migration of Muslims to their domain. In 1613 the Portuguese Captain General, de Azevedo issued a decree preventing the further immigration of Muslims to Kotte. In 1622, 1623, 1624 and 1626 orders were issued by the Portuguese to expel Muslims from their territory.[2] It is not certain how effectively these orders were implemented or what effect they had on the trading community. It is very unlikely that they accepted conversion as a solution to their problems. The more important side effect of the Portuguese restrictive policies was the gradual infiltration of a coastal trading community into the interior of the island. The influx of coastal Moors[3] to the hinterland was welcomed by the Kandyan kings, because the kingdom was denuded of manpower after the wars and invasions. Hitherto they came in search of merchandise which they carried away to the coast and beyond, but now in the face of Portuguese oppression they came not only as refugees but also as welcome invitees of the Kings of Kandy. There is evidence that at least 4000 Muslims were well received by Senarat (1604–35) and accommodated in the fertile lands around Batticaloa, where their descendants still form an important component of the population.[4] The kingdom was devastated and depopulated after the frequent invasions and the manpower was needed to work the fields. The problem was solved to a certain extent by settling Sinhala and Muslim refugees from Portuguese territory from South India and Bengal as well.[5] This was a far-sighted policy, which was mutually advantageous and resulted in the quick recovery of the kingdom as is proved by the campaigns of 1628 to 1630.[6] It could be said that with the repressive measures of the Portuguese, the Ceylonisation of the Muslims had commenced. The exodus of Muslims to Kandy seems to have continued in the reign of Rajasingha II (1635–87) son of Senarat. Tradition has it that the Arabs made their way to Kandy and the King engaged their services to fight the Portuguese. As a mark of gratitude the King gave them lands, encouraged them to marry Kandyan women and settled them

in Akurana.[7] According to this tradition, the Muslim settlement in Akurana goes back to the late seventeenth century. The itinerant coastal traders who were "Indo-Arab in ethnic character" were well in the process of being Ceylonised, after their settlement in the heart of the kingdom and their intermarriage with the Kandyans. When the Dutch stepped into the shoes of the Portuguese as masters of the maritime provinces of the island in 1658, the outlook for the Muslims in the coast was bleak as ever. To the Dutch trading company economic considerations superseded everything else and hence the Muslims were despised commercial rivals and this animosity was carried over to the sphere of religion as well. The memoirs of successive Dutch governors bear ample testimony to their hostile attitude towards the Muslims. Rigorous regulations were imposed and implemented with ruthless vigour to oust the Muslims from the peaceful exchange of commodities that they carried on with the Kandyans. Preferential tariffs were introduced discriminating in favour of Burghers (residents of Dutch descent) and Sinhala Christians, much to the disadvantage of the Muslim traders.[8]

In addition to ousting them from the inland trade the Dutch took steps to expel them from their towns, which meant that more and more Muslims took refuge in the Kandyan Kingdom. The Dutch authorities were aware that it was the Muslims who fanned the flames and instigated the King and nobles to demand concessions from the Dutch. The Dutch GovernorJ.S. van Gollennesse (1743–1751) remarked that ever "since the scandalous rabble of Moors"[9] flocked in such great numbers to that land, the attitude of the Court has even been more hostile. This shows that there was a continuous drift of Muslims from the maritime provinces to the interior throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Muslims and Kandyan Trade

It would be relevant at this stage to examine the trading pattern of the Kandyan Kingdom in which the Muslims were the chief intermediaries. The kings of Kandy were not prepared to remain locked up in their mountain stronghold and as they grew in power and influence in the seventeenth century they wished to pursue their trade policies as well as maintain their links with the outside world. Hence the bone of contention between the King and the European was the question of the Island's ports.

In 1658, when the Dutch replaced the Portuguese on the seaboard, the Kandyans still controlled the ports of Kalpitiya and Puttalam on the West

coast and Trincomalee, Kottiyar and Batticaloa on the East, and through these they traded freely with the Modura and the Coromandel with the Muslims and a few Chetties[10] acting as middlemen.[11] The main item of export was arecanuts for which there was a continuous demand and the chief import was cloth of South-Indian make. Each of these ports served a different area of the kingdom and was its point of distribution. Kottiyar[12] near Trincomalee was the best harbour belonging to the king, with excellent berthing facilities. There was a large bazaar a few miles inland at Kilivetty, where the exchange of commodities took place. Here there was a royal customs house where an officer collected dues on behalf of the king.[13] At Kilivetty, the visiting British envoy, John Pybus[14] met some Choliar[15] merchants bringing gingelly seeds, beads and dried coconuts to be sold to the neighbouring inhabitants[16] From Kottiyar to Kandy there was a land route following the Mahaweli Ganga, frequented by Muslim **tavalam** or convoys of pack oxen taking commodities to and fro. It is interesting to note that in 1762, Pybus, on his way to Kandy from Trincomalee met a caravan of Muslims with twenty to thirty oxen loaded with bags of grain carrying it to the sea coast in exchange for salt.[17] There early trade routes leading from the heart of the Kingdom to the ports are relevant to our study because Muslim settlements have emerged along these routes in the course of time. At a time when communications were poor it took several days for a **tavalam** or caravan consisting of many beasts of burden to reach its destination and hence the need arose for resting places at night. These resting places became the nuclei of the later Muslim settlements. Two such predominantly Muslim villages on the land route from Kottiyar to Kandy were Pangurana,[18] Nikavatavana,[19] where Pybus the Englishman spent his sleepless nights.

The hinterland of Batticaloa was a fertile paddy growing area from pre-Christian times, but fell into neglect after the collapse of the hydraulic system. After Senarat settled large numbers of Muslims and Tamils in the area paddy culture was revived and excess grain was taken from Batticaloa to other parts of the island where it was needed.

There were roads leading to it from the Kingdom through Minipe and Vellassa. Hundreds of **sampans** or small boats used to sail into Kottiyar and Batticaloa,[20] which shows that there was brisk trading activity with South India.

The populous and fertile Seven Korales had Puttalam and Kalpitiya as its outlet. The Muslim traders brought the produce of the Seven Korales

mainly areca and rice on pack oxen to Puttalam and from there in small boats to Kalpitiya since the larger vessels that came from Madura and Tanjore usually stopped at Kalpitiya. There was a strong concentration of Muslims in the Puttalam, Kalpitiya coastal strip and one at least of the chieftains in this area, Kumara Vanniya was a Muslim. While he functioned under the disava or governor of Puttalam, he had within his jurisdiction Sinhala and Muslim villagers[21] The South and South-West parts of the Kingdom had no direct access to the sea since the European was established along the Western seaboard.[22] Hence the exchange of commodities took place along the frontier towns of Ruvanvalla, Sitavaka and Katuvana and there are several references to Muslim merchants with their **tavalam** transacting business in these border towns.[23] At Ruvanvalla and Sitavaka the produce of the Kandyan Kingdom was available to the Colombo market and at Katuvana there was commerce with the traders in the South.

The Structural Assimilation of the Muslims into Kandyan Body Politic

Although the Muslim traders and the Sinhala peasants have peacefully co-existed for centuries, it was in the Kandyan Kingdom that the integration of the two communities took place. The process appears to be a structural assimilation which is a term used by sociologists to denote the integration of ethnic groups into full social participation primarily through gaining access to informal or primary groups such as families, clubs and cliques. This process differs from cultural assimilation in the course of which the ethnic minority acquires the values, beliefs, language and behaviour of the dominant group.[24] The Muslims of the Kandyan Kingdom were not thus acculturated, but maintained intact their identity, through their adherence to Islam and the distinctive features associated with the religion; but became equal and indispensable participants in the mainstream of Kandyan society. This was made possible by their voluntary association in the socio-economic mechanism known as the **badda** system. We will proceed to a brief discussion of the working of the **badda** system since it is crucial to our analysis which follows.

The Kandyan administrative system was a territorial one and its main feature was the delegation of the King's powers over his Kingdom to a number of officers, the base of the pyramid being formed by a number of headmen, each of whom had a district area of territory, over which he exercised the functions of government. Co-existing with this horizontal system was a system of departments known as **baddas** which cut verti-

The entire **madige badda** was placed under the **madige badda nilame** appointed by the king and sometimes it was placed under a **disava** or provincial governor. In the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasingha (1747–81) Sheik Alim, a Muslim was appointed **madige badda nilame** and after him, his grandson, Sheik Abdul Cader held the same office.[30] Later Makula Mohandiram, a Muslim was **madige disava** of the Seven Korales.[31] Since the **madige** included both Muslims and Sinhala fisherfolk, here we find an example of Muslims rising to high offices of authority over the Sinhalese through their association with the **badda** system. Obviously, race and religion were of no consequence when it came to appointments to high offices. It is interesting to note how the Muslims were administered and how their special skills, mainly in the sphere of trade, in which they excelled were channelled towards the benefit of the state. In the Udarata there were a few villages which were predominantly Muslim, but there were also numerous Sinhala villages with one or two Muslim families living amidst the Sinhala peasants. For instance in Dumbuluwawa and Hingula there were less than eight to ten Muslims in each village,[32] whereas Akurana was predominantly Muslim. Whatever their proportion in the population was, the Muslims were organised at village level under a **muhandiram, lekama** and several headmen, who were appointed by the head of the **madige**.[33] Judging from the fact that even the highest post in the **madige** was sometimes held by a Muslim and also from the references to Muslim **muhandirams**[34] and **lekamas**[35] it is certain that all these appointments were made irrespective of race and religion. There are Muslim families in the Kandyan areas even today who bear the family name Muhandiramlage, who, undoubtedly are descendents of such officers under the Kandyan kings. Since the Muslims were given permission to settle in the king's land and trade in his kingdom, they (like the Sinhala subjects) had to perform a certain service to the king, one of which was to trade on his behalf. The trade in areca, which was a royal monopoly, was entrusted to the **madige badda** and both the Muslims and the fisherfolk, traded on the same terms. Each **muhandiram** received annually from the treasury 300 **ridi**[36] as an advance for the purchase of areca and was obliged to return 600.[37] This money was sufficient to buy 50 **amunams**[38] of areca at 6 **ridi** per amunam. The traders went from house to house collecting the areca at a very low price. Since the trade in areca was a royal monopoly, the price of the nuts was very low; the villages being left with only two alternatives; either to sell the nuts to the king's traders at a nominal price, or let the nuts rot under the trees. Those were taken by pack oxen to Ruvanwalla and sold at higher prices to the Colombo market, after which the profits were accounted to the treasury.[39] In order to make a better deal the

Muslim traders, when they received the cash from the treasury, would go to the coastal towns of Puttalam and Chilaw and buy salt, dried fish and cloth from the traders who came from South India and then barter these articles for areca in the Four Korales where the nuts were plentiful.[40] These were sold at Ruvanvalla, to the Colombo market or taken to Puttalam and Chilaw and sold to Indian merchants.[41] In addition to their specialisation in trade, their itinerant habits and their possession of oxen were also channelled for State service. Since their oxen grazed on the king's lands, they were expected to provide beasts of burden to transport any article for the king, or the **madige badda nilame.** For instance the Muslims of Dumbuluwawa and Hingula in the Four Korales were employed in the conveyance of grain, the former for the king and the latter for the chief, two or three times a year if necessary, at every harvest.[42] The Muslims of Uva, which lay in proximity to the salt pans of the South-East had to bring salt to the royal stores as a part of their obligatory service.[43]

The Kandyan villages were more or less self-sufficient with regard to food. Each man's holding consisting of paddy land, high land (godamada) and a forest stretch provided the basic necessities of life. The village smith supplied the few tools required for agriculture, but the Kandyan villager had to depend on the trader for these items. Salt was precious since it had to be fetched from the coast and so was dried fish, a delicacy for the highlander. Cloth, especially of South Indian make was highly prized. These rare commodities were brought to the villagers' doorsteps by the Muslim traders and the nuts were carried away in exchange. "Money is not plentiful in this land but by means of these nuts which is a great commodity to carry to the coast of Coromandel they furnish themselves with all things they need."[44] In this deal, which was indispensable for the villager, the middleman was the Muslim trader.

It is seen that the Muslims performed a useful service to society through their organisation known as the **sulan badda madige.** It mobilised the Muslims and their talents for state service. The business acumen of the Muslims, their wealth of oxen, their itinerant habits, were all utilised to serve the needs of the state and through their voluntary participation in the system they were integrated into the society while preserving their identity as Muslims.

Muslims and the Vihara System

Even more remarkable is the involvement of the Muslims in the functioning of the vihara or the Buddhist monastic system. Islam demands from

its believers, strict adherence to its principles to the total exclusion of all other faiths. The Kandyan Muslims were allowed to practise their religion freely and they remained true to their faith, but they had the flexibility and adaptability to fit into the mechanism of the Buddhist monastic system, with no prejudice to their Islamic beliefs. The viharas were maintained by grants of land from the king; the unit of allocation being a village or **gama.** When the king granted a royal village to the vihara it became a **vihara gama** and the chief monk became the landlord. The grantee received only that portion of the village which was reserved for the holder, the **muttetuva,** which is equivalent to the lord's demesne in European feudalism. The **muttettuva** usually comprised of one-fifths or one-sixth of the village area. All the cultivable land outside the **muttettuva** was divided into **nila pangu** or service shares and each of these was occupied by a **pangukaraya** or shareholder who performed certain services to the vihara, according to his case, in return for living on the vihara land.(45)

The vihara system, in its practical working necessitated a harmonious integration of all the various elements in society. Even the Muslims, who differed from the majority people in race and religion were welded into this mechanism for mutual benefit, demonstrating the adjustability of the Muslims, the accommodating nature of Kandyan institutions and the tolerance of the Buddhists, especially during the time when religious bigotry was the order of the day. Obviously, no attempt was made by the bhikkhus to convert the Muslims living in the temple lands; instead their skills and resources were utilised for the benefit of the vihara.

The Muslims, as we have seen were traders and owned pack oxen. Accordingly, we find the Muslim tenants of the temple lands occupying the **Patavili pangu** or transport shares. Their main obligation to the vihara for occupying its land was to transport the grain from the **muttettu** fields to the vihara granary. Some of them paid dues to the temple in the form of salt and dried fish, which were their chief items of trade. The tenants in the village of Rambukandana belonging to the ancient Ridi vihara were all Muslims and they rendered transport service to the vihara.(46) The village of Dunuvila belonged to the famous Degoldoruva vihara and as usual the Muslims occupied the **Patavili parngu** or transport stores. Each tenant supplied one pack bullock for seven days twice a year to carry paddy. Those who owned high land; that is land not suitable for paddy cultivation, gave one measure of salt and a dried fish to the vihara.(47) The diary of Moratota Rajaguru Dhammakkhanda Thero (dated 1784-1813) gives a list of

various dues and obligatory services that the Muslim tenants performed to the Udamakadavara Purana Vihara in Hingula, Mavanalla.[48]

The Muslims and the Devala System.

The peaceful integration of the Muslims into the functioning of the devales (which are shrines dedicated to Hindu Gods) stands in striking contrast to the violent Hindu Muslim rivalries and religious wars which were rampant in the neighbouring sub-continent at the time. Buddhism, wherever it spread absorbed existing cults and brought them within its fold leaving little room for conflict. In Sri Lanka the Hindu deities became subservient to the Buddha and the co-existence of the vihara and devala organisations both recognised and supported by the state exemplifies the peaceful synthesis of Hinduism and Buddhism. This process was accelerated during the reigns of the last four kings of Kandy (1739-1815) who were of South Indian origin and Hindus before they ascended the throne. The Hindus and Buddhists having lived in the island for centuries saw no conflict between the two systems, although in theory the two served two different needs and were served by two different religious specialists.

In the case of Islam no such ideological synthesizing ever took place. Instead the Muslims as a group became attached to the functioning of the devala structure, which was strengthened by their skills and resources. The Kandyan king granted lands for the upkeep of the devalas and these were called **devalagama.** These lands were administered by a **basnayake nilame** appointed by the king from among the highest ranks of the govikula. He was the chief lay officer in charge of the shrine. As in the case of the viharas there were Muslim tenants occupying devale lands. For instance the village of Pamunuva belonged to the famous Gadaladeniya devale, which in turn was a part of the Gadaladeniya vihara complex. The Muslims in Pamunuva occupied what was called the **lunudena panguva** (literally, the share that supplies salt) and they were obliged to contribute annually fourteen seruvas[49] of salt towards the maintenance of the devale staff.[50] Even more noteworthy in this respect is the case of Ahamadu Lebbe of Dodandeniya (a village in Udunuvara, West of Ambakke), which was a part of the land belonging to the well-known Ambakke Devale. Judging from the services he had to render, the Lebbe was an eminent man in the area. It was said earlier that all obligatory services performed towards the State or religious institution was based on the caste of the performer. The tenants who belonged to the **govikula** did not perform any specialized professional service; instead they had to be present on ceremonial occasions and attend on the **basnayake nilame**

when he came to the village. Ahamadu Lebbe had to perform the very honourable service of being present at the **devala** ceremonies and also making his appearance on fifteen days of the annual perahera or procession in addition to supplying buffaloes for ploughing, iron implements and clay tiles to the devale.[51] Obviously Ahamadu Lebbe considered it a matter of pride and prestige to be associated with the devale ceremonial, and the **devala** authorities in turn were honoured by the presence of Ahamadu Lebbe in their midst. This is a striking example of the policy of live and let live characteristic of Sinhala society at the time. Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists were voluntary participants in the festivities of the Ambakke devale and none of these groups lost their cultural identity in the process.

The spiritual needs of the Muslims were not neglected. As mentioned earlier all the tenants of the village of Rambukandana were Muslims, who rendered service to the Ridi vihara and the bhikkhus of the Ridi vihara had set apart a portion of land from the **viharagama** for the maintenance of a Muslim priest. Here were Muslim tenants performing without reluctance service to a Buddhist vihara, and that vihara freely supporting a Muslim priest to lookafter the spiritual needs of the Muslim tenants. In 1870, the British Service Tenure Commissioners were struck by this case of remarkable religious tolerance, perhaps unique in the annals of religion.[52]

It is evident from Knox's penetrating study that as far back as the seventeenth century the Kandyan kings donated land for the maintenance of mosques on the same basis as they gave land to the vihares; but instead of obligatory service, the tenants contributed money for its upkeep. There were instances when charitable Sinhala people gifted land to the Muslims to erect places of worship.

Robert Knox who had every reason to dislike the king Rajasingha II (1635 - 1687) and his people, states:

> "Nor are they charitable to the poor of their own nation, but as I said to others; and particularly to the Moorish beggars, who are Mohametans by Religion. They have a temple in Kande. A certain former king gave this Temple this priviledge, that every Freeholder should contribute a Ponnam to it. And these Moors go to every house in the land to receive it. They come very confidently when they beg, and they say they come to fulfil the peoples charity, and

the people do liberally relieve them for charity sake. The Moor Pilgrims have many pieces of land given them by well disposed persons out of charity, where they build houses and live. And this land becomes theirs from generation to generation for ever."[53]

It is evident that from the time the Muslims were driven away from the coastal areas first by the Portuguese and then the Dutch, the Kandyan kings; people and even the bhikkhus, welcomed them and made the necessary arrangements to provide for their spiritual needs.[54] It was this gesture of goodwill which helped a small minority to maintain their cultural identity amidst an alien population.

Muslims and the caste system.

We have seen that the dominant feature of Kandyan society during the period under survey was the stratification of the people into categories of varying rank known as castes. Muslim society on the other hand was uninhibited by caste rules and every one was an equal member of the brotherhood of Islam. Infused with such egalitarian ideals it seems anomalous that they should have fitted so easily into the caste ridden Kandyan social structure. The explanation to this, perhaps, lies in the fact that the caste system in Sri Lanka, unlike in India, had no religious sanction. The Buddha vehemently denounced the social system based on caste, and hence in Sinhala society we get a very inconsistent, situation, where despite the Buddha's injunction, the caste system entered into the administration, both secular and ecclesiastical, regulated taxation and governed all social relationships with no religious dogma to sanctify it, caste in Sri Lanka was primarily a secular grouping, with what Max Weber calls a "vocational ethic".[55] The contribution of each caste to society was the expert execution of its assigned vocation. Into this structure the Muslims fitted easily; their special skills were trade and transport and with these assets they served society technically, functioning like a caste group.

The Muslims were placed very high in the Sinhala caste heirarchy. According to the **Niti Nighanduva**,[56] which is a compilation of Kandyan law, foreigners who have recently migrated from countries where caste distinctions are not observed like **Kavisi** (negroes), **Ja** (Malays) and **Yon** (Muslims) were placed immediately below the **mudali peruva** of one **govikula**. The **govikula** which was considered the highest caste consisted of more than half the Sinhala population. But is was sub-divided into various sub-castes and the highest among them was the **mudaliperuva** from which was drawn the high officers of the bureaucracy. In actual

practice as well, we find a number of Muslims rubbing shoulders with the aristocracy. It was the obligation of the people belonging to the higher rungs of the **govikula** to provide cooked and uncooked food to all high officers while on circuit and even to foreign envoys while travelling to the capital.[57] There were Muslims too performing this honourable service. For instance, Ahamadu Lebbe already referred to, was obliged to supply food to the **basnayake nilame** when the latter visited the Ambakke devale for its festivities.[58] The **basnayake nilame** would not accept food from anyone whom he considered his social inferior. However, there seems to have been a certain resentment from parents when it came to Sinhala Muslim intermarriages. Eknaligoda Dingiri Etana married a Muslim and was disinherited by her father as a result. She went to courts claiming that the Muslims were equal to the **govikula.**[59]

Muslims as envoys of the king.

The Muslims of the Kandyan kingdom served the king in several ways and many of these services were of a confidential and honourable nature. In 1762, when John Pybus, the Englishman travelled for 13 days from Trincomalee to Gannoruva, the authorised representative of the king who attended on Pybus was a Muslim. Pybus does not mention the name of the officer in attendance, but it has been reported to the Dutch in Colombo (who were very vigilant about this mission), that the son of Maula Mohandiram, a Muslim was frequently seen in the company of the envoy. The king was so pleased with his performance that the son of Maula Mohandiram was showered with gifts of gold.[60] Further, a promissory note stating that father and son owed the treasury a sum of 1500 and 2000 pagodas, was torn up and the debt liquidated.[61] We learn from the same source that Uduma Lebbe, son of Maula Mohandiram, was sent by the Kandyan king to Muhammed Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic, so as to negotiate for British help through him.[62] •The Nawab was rather sceptical and asked him why the king of Kandy did not send a Sinhala minister on such an important mission and went to the extent of sending an emissary to the Kandyan court to check the bona-fides of Uduma Lebbe. On another occasion Maula Mohandiram himself was sent to Madras to enlist troops for the king in case tension increased between the king and the Dutch.[63] The king made use of his Muslim subjects to keep abreast of developments outside the kingdom, especially to find out the power politics in South India, as well as developments in the Company's territory. The Dutch governor, Jan Schreuder[64] (1762) complains that the Muslims are corrupting the king of Kandy and because of Muslim association the Kandyan court has become cunning and conversant with the Company's affairs.

High ranking Muslims were selected for important foreign assignments because they had sea-faring habits, international links, linguistic ability[65] and according to Ryckloff Van Goens[66] they were well equipped with "smooth talk", all of which were valuable attributes and made them particularly adept at diplomacy. It appears that such ambassadorial duties have been traditionally assigned to Muslims by the Sinhala kings for as far back as 1283, Buvanakabahu I of Yapahuva (1272 – 1284) sent Al-Haj Abu Uthman to the court of Egypt to negotiate direct trade connections.[67]

Muslims as royal physicians.

It is seen that there were Muslims serving in various capacities in the king's palace. The organisation and provisioning of the palace was in itself a major task of administration and the palace service was distinct from the rest of the bureaucracy. One area in which the Muslims seem to have specialised, was the royal **betge** or department of king's physicians, which functioned under the **betge mohandiram nilame.** This post was held for generations by a highly respected family of Muslim physicians. The family name was Rajapaksa Waidyatillaka Gopala, which shows the extent to which the family had been Ceylonised. A grant of 1747 shows that the king gifted land in the fertile district of Siduruvana, Udunuvara to Rajapaksa Waidyatilaka Gopala Mudaliya, for the great loyalty and faithfulness with which he served the king.[68] Later in 1786, Buvalikada Vedaralalage Abubakr Pulle who was a physician in the king's **betge** attended on the favourite secondary wife of king Rajadi Rajasingha, Alugama Dugganna Unnanse and was rewarded with lands in Daskara.[69] Judging from these references to Muslim physicians it could be assumed that there were many of them practising in the kingdom and rising to the highest ranks in thier profession. There is no indication of what system of medicine they practised. There are still Muslim in Sri Lanka villages who are, very likely, descendants of the Kandyan practitioners.

Muslims and the royal bath.

Another department of importance in the palace was the royal bath, which was a complicated affair, involving the services of nearly 500 families, who held land in return for service in the **ulpange** or royal bath-house. There is evidence that Muslims were employed in this elaborate organisation though in what capacity we are not certain.[70] It could be that they were given the privilege of washing His Majesty's feet, which was an honour bestowed on very high caste folk or the Muslims may have been remotely associated with the **ulpange** as suppliers of firewood to heat the bath.

Muslims in the royal kitchen

A much more responsible task within the palace in which Muslims were employed was the **multange** or royal kitchen.[71] Employment in the royal kitchen was restricted to extremely trustworthy and reliable servants, since the king's life depended on them. Quite apart from the fact that the Kandyan kings would have relished Muslim dishes, it is seen that the Muslims were considered very loyal supporters of the crown.

Muslims in the army.

From the very beginning of Muslim infiltration into the Kandyan kingdom, they served in the king's army. We have seen that as far back as the reign of Rajasingha II (1635 - 1687), Arab refugees fought for the king.[72] It seems that they formed a sizeable component of the Kandyan king's standing army throughout the existence of the kingdom. Due to financial constraints the Kandyan king's standing army was a small one, specially during the last days of the kingdom and it was noticed that in 1810, 400 Malabars, 250 Moormen and 200 Malays were being trained in Kandy.[73] It is not uncommon for kings to have a non-Sinhala component in their army, so as to keep local conspiracies in check.

Muslim weavers, tailors and barbers.

The Muslims were also skilled weavers. According to tradition the Muslims introduced the **Salagama** or weavers' caste to the island, and the Muslims seemed to have practised the skill in a significant way. In 1762, when John Pybus was travelling to Kandy, he spent his third night in a village called Pangurana which was 21 miles from Trincomalee. This was occupied by Muslims and Pybus noticed, that in addition to animal husbandry and agriculture, the Muslim peasants used to weave a "few pieces of ordinary cotton cloth for their own wear." This village was situated within the province of Tamankaduva and the provincial governor or **disava** lived in Kandy. It is interesting to note that each family of weavers had to give the **disava** one piece of cloth a year as tax. At the beginning of the 19th century the only weavers in Ceylon were the Muslims and Salagama people and by 1910 [74] the majority of weavers were the Muslims of Batticaloa.[75] Tailoring was also another skill which they practised. Among the few Muslims who were given permission by the Dutch to temporarily settle in Colombo, were some tailors.[76] Muslim tailors are common in Colombo even today. There is a reference to Muslim barbers or **panikki**.[77]

Muslims in agriculture.

We have noticed that in the Kandyan kingdom everyone lived by agriculture and the Muslims were no exception. Although they first came as traders and began to cultivate the land as share-croppers, with the passage of time they acquired land and tilled their own fields. With the breakdown of the irrigation system, the fertile rice lands around Batticaloa became desolate and depopulated. This area came back to life once again when Senarat settled Muslims, Tamils and Bengalis to work the fields.[78] It is said that the Muslims of the Eastern Province are the best farmers in the country and this expertise must have been acquired over generations. Pybus noticed that in 1762, the village of Pangurana, situated on the Kaudulla Oya, was inhabited by Muslims. There were about a dozen houses and the villagers owned paddy land and 50 - 60 head of cattle, mainly buffaloes.[79] The availability of water and cattle provided the pre-requisites for rice cultivation. From the foregoing analysis it is clear that the Muslims in the Kandyan kingdom were a versatile group of people, who had mastered a variety of skills and served the country in many different ways. Davy noticed that they were "a stout active shrewd enterprising race."

Sinhala Muslim relationship: A Symbiosis.

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that the relationship between the Sinhalese and Muslims during the period under survey was a cordial one despite all Dutch attempts to create a rift between them. On one occasion the Dutch wrote to the Kandyan chief that the Moghuls, who were dominant in North India were threatening to come to Ramesvaram and thence to Ceylon and that the Muslim traders of the coast would betray this country to their co-religionists.[80] Even this threat did not work, and the Sinhala-Muslim unity remained firm as ever. This is an example of a long-standing stable situation where different ethnic groups that make up a society, have developed ways of co-existence without the need of blatantly obvious means of coercion; sociologists would term this a symbiotic relationship. The terms symbiosis means a relation of mutual dependence between unlike and distinct groups within a community that works to their mutual advantage.[81]

In this type of situation, which is rare in modern industrial society, there was no scramble for the same scarce resources and no competition for unavailable jobs, but the diverse elements linked into a symbiotic network of interdependance based on their specialisation in the division of labour.

An example of this would be a community or region where one ethnic group concentrates on agriculture, another on manufacturing, the latter buying the former's produce with the earnings from sales within and outside the community or region. The mutual dependence that developed in Canada between the white fur traders on the one hand and Indian trappers and transporters on the other, is shown as an example of perfect symbiosis.[82] Whether or not such relations are exploitative is beside the point. If the people in the situation regard it as to their advantage and there is a consensus that stretches across ethnic barriers, as it happened in the Kandyan Kingdom then we get a symbiotic network of interdependence. Muslim specialisation was mainly in trades in which the Kandyans, due to traditional values, religious and caste restrictions were not interested in pursuing. "The Cingalese discover no Inclination for Trade or Navigation. Indeed, as they chiefly inhabit the Inland Parts of the Island, they are not much in the way of either."[83] On the other hand the Muslims took easily to both, as the Hollander remarks, "as a fish takes to water." The only form of transport in the kingdom were the beasts of burden. The Sinhalese reared cattle mainly for agricultural purposes and hence the chief owners of pack oxen were the Muslims. Rev. James Cordiner noticed that, whereas the Muslims and Hindus were very active in the pearl fisheries, the Sinhalas were not involved in it at all.[84] The Kandyans were a settled and mainly agricultural people who considered the ownership of land the only prestigious form of wealth, found the Muslims useful and enterprising associates supplying various needs and performing diverse services which they themselves were traditionally reluctant to get involved in. Here we find two communities, aliens in race, religion and culture, but considered equals in every respect, harmoniously co-existing in a mutually benefiting relationship.

Factors which facilitated Sinhala Muslim harmony.

One of the important factors which contributed towards this harmonious relationship was that Islam did not come to Ceylon as a conquering, proselytising force in the manner it came to India. Then as now they went about their business peacefully, maintaining cordial relations with all concerned and enjoying the favour and patronage of the court, but not forming a power group. When they moved into the interior of the country under Dutch and Portuguese pressure, they were welcomed by the Kandyan kings, who gave them land and encouraged them to marry Kandyan women. The attitude of the Kandyan kings towards Muslims, Tamils and Christians of every demomination, living within the realm was magnanimous, true to the ideals of Hindu Buddhist monarchy. In

Sinhala society, there was no social rejection of communion with foreigners, due no doubt to the egalitarianism and internationalism of their faith. Not only did the kings, bhikkhus and people show a remarkable degree of tolerance to the adherents of the Islamic faith, making no attempt to wear them away from their beliefs but also actively encouraged the Muslims to build their places of worship and even supported their priests. This tolerant attitude of both groups facilitated their peaceful co-existence with no danger to the cultural identity of the minority group. The Muslims continued to adhere to Islamic principles. For instance their women were kept in purdah even after centuries of association with the Sinhalas among whom the seclusion of women was unknown. Rev. James Cordiner, who was in Ceylon from 1794 to 1804 writes about the Muslims, "Their women are scarcely ever seen by strangers. When a man wants to transport his wife from one place to another, if he cannot afford a palanquin, he places her cross-legged upon a bullock completely covered with a white cloth so that not a particle of her skin could be seen, nor can she see where she is going. The husband walks by her side."[35] If this was the case with the Muslim women of Colombo, there is no doubt that it was the same in the interior of the island, although we have not found any reference to them. The Muslims even continued to practice their own legal system and community courts were held in the mosque after the prayers. All this goes to prove that there was no attempt at cultural assimilation.

Another factor which contributed towards this harmonious relationship was the presence of a common adversary on the coast. At the beginning there was no clash of interests between the Arab trading communities and the indigenous population and hence there was little conflict. In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries when Ceylonisation of the Muslims took place, there was always an European threat on the coast. The European occupation adversely affected, the king, nobles and people and was particularly detrimental to the interests of the Muslims. Hence the irritable presence of a common foe, which was a major threat, submerged any elements of discord and welded the various groups together. From the very inception the kingdom was faced with this threat; in fact it emerged as a response to it, and this prevented a major rupture arising from the animosities within the society. Georg Simmel has shown how unification by a more chronic than acute danger, by an always latent but never exploding conflict is the most effective where the problem is the lasting unification of divergent elements.[36]

In outward appearance dress and manners the Muslims differed but little from the Sinhalas.[87] The absence of sharp, ineffable, racial differences made visible by skin colour or even dress would certainly have contributed to easy social intercourse. By the end of the 18th century there was a perceptible difference between Kandyan Muslims and low country Muslims. It is mentioned in Dutch sources that the Muslim spies employed by the Company went to Kandyan territory disguised as Kandyan Muslims.[88] It is difficult to say what the difference was but it would have been the same as that between low country and Kandyan Sinhalas of the time. This shows that as time went on the Muslims wherever they lived, adopted the outward appearance of their neighbours.

Another factor which perhaps contributed to the intergration of society was the fact that the Muslims were interspersed all over the island. Where there is a coincidence of ethnic and territorial boundaries, the likelihood of strong ethnic solidarity is enhanced, for it implies that there is a low rate of interaction between members of different ethnic groups. This situation did not arise in the Kandyan kingdom. There were few villages like Akurana which were predominantly Muslim, but in great many of the villages there were one or two Muslim families scattered amidst the Sinhala population. Further, there was in Kandy at this time small groups of people of diverse origin, like Muslims, Malays, Tamils, Kaffirs and many Europeans. Usually when there are more than two such groups the chances of polarisation are reduced.

This long and close association between the Sinhalas and Muslims continued till the British came and began their masterly manipulations of the diverse components of society. As in India, the Muslims became a potential weapon in their hands, an ally who could be used to their advantage to undermine the power and influence of the King of Kandy. Soon after we see the consequence of the subtle policies. Then together with the commutation of services, monetisation of the economy, secularisation and modernisation of society which led to competition where there was co-operation, fissures began to appear on the hitherto smooth surface.

NOTES

1. The name Ceylon will be used instead of Sri Lanka because all our sources refer to the island by that name.

2. C. R. de Silva, **The Portuguese in Ceylon 1617-1638,** Colombo, 1972, pp. 84 - 86.

3. Contemporary European term to describe all Muslims.

4. C. R. de Silva, **Op. cit.** p. 86.

5. **Ibid.** p. 93

6. **Ibid.** p. 109

7. A. C. Lawrie, **A Gazetteer of the Central Provinces of Ceylon,** 2 Vols. Colombo, 1896 and 1898. Vol. I. p. 6 Akurana is a predominantly Muslim village 8 miles North of Kandy on the main Matale road.

8. Memoir of Ryckloff van Goens 1663 - 1675, trans. by E. Reimers, 1932. **p.** 17.

9. Memoir of J. S. van Gollennesse, Governor of Ceylon 1743 - 1751 translated and edited by S. Arasaratnam, 1974. p. 45.

10. Chetties are a South Indian trading community some of whom had settled in the island.

11. For details see S. Arasaratnam, "The Kingdom of Kandy: Aspects of its External Relations and Commerce, 1658 - 1710." in **The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies,** Vol. 3, No. 2, July - Dec. 1960, pp. 110 - 127.

12. A manuscript (BM Or 6603 (65) of the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747 - 1781) of Kandy mentions Kottiyarama, the area around the port of Kottiyar as a **sulu disava** or minor province of the king, and its governor or **disava** lived in Kandy. The other **sulu disavas** were, Panama Munnessarama, Tambalagamuva (the area around the Trincomalee harbour) Madakalapuva area around Batticaloa) and Puttalama. All those were areas of brisk Muslim trading activity from which the king derived a sizeable income. The carving out of those minor provinces was an administrative measure necessitated by the growing economic importance of these areas.

13. S. Arasaratnam, **op. cit.** p 110. In 1671, the customs officer was Mylar Perumal, a Chetty.

14. In 1762, the British government at Madras despatched an envoy, John Pybus, to the Kandyan court with the object of entering into an alliance. See **The Pybus Embassy** to Kandy, 1762, transcribed with notes by R. Raven-Hart, Ceylon 1958.

15. The Dutch called the Muslim traders of Ceylon and Malabar by this name.

16. **The Pybus Embassy,** p. 34

17. **The Pybus Embassy,** p. 47

18. **Ibid.** p. 36

19. **Ibid.** p. 42

20. S. Arasaratnam **Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658 - 1687,** Netherlands, 1958, p. 149.

21. John D'Oyly, **A. sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom** (Ceylon), 1929. pp. 51 - 52.

22. S. Arasaratnam, The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, Vol. 3 July - Dec. 1960, p. III.

23. **Diary of Mr. John D'Oyly, J. R. A. S. C. B.,** Vol. XXV, No. 69, 1917. p. 133.

24. **Sociology: Experiencing and Changing Society,** George Ritzer, Kenneth C. W. Kammeyer, Norman R. Yetman, Toronto, 1979, pp. 345 & 6.

25. **L. S. Dewaraja, The Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon 1707** - 1760, Colombo, 1972. pp. 180, 181.

26. Abeysinghe Tikiri, **The Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594 - 1612,** Colombo, 1966. p. 72

27. Ralph Pieris, **Sinhalese Social Organisation, Kandyan Period, Colombo, 1956. p. 99.**

28. For details see Sir John D'Oyly, **A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom,** Colombo, 1929. pp. 16 - 17.

29. John Davy, **An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and its inhabitants with travels in that Island, London** ? 1821. p. 123. Also Charles Pridham, **An Historical and Statistical Account of Ceylon and its Dependencies,** London. 1848, p. 237. The etymology of **sulan badda** as given in these works seems fanciful.

30. PRO/CO/416/20 folio 375.

31. **Diary of Sir John Y'Oly,** with an introduction and notes by H. W. Codrington, Colombo, 1917. p. 144.

32. John D'Oyly, **The Constitution,** p. 17

33. John D'Oyly, **op. cit.** p. 17

34. An office of varying degrees of importance.

35. Clerk.

36. A silver coin made of wire twisted into a hook and worth 8 penee in 1815.

37. John D'Oyly, **op. cit.**

38. An Amunam is equal to about 30,000 nuts.

39. John D'Oyly, **op.cit.** p. 17

40. **D'Oyly's Diary,** p. 116.

41. Interesting anecdotes are related about the Muslim traders of Kandy. Kalu Lekama borrowed 300 **ridi** from the teasury to trade on the understanding that he would pay a certain stipulated sum per annum as interest. He defaulted payment and was brought to the king, Kirti Sri Rajasinha. The debtor was taken into custody, severely chastised and a part of the debt recovered. (PRO/CO/416/19/p. 203).

42. John D'Oyly, **The Constitution,** p. 17

43. D'Oyly's Diary, p. 114

44. Robert Knox, **An Historical Relation of Ceylon,** p. 1911.

45. L. S. Dewaraja, **op. cit.** pp. 137 – 140.

46. PRO/CO/57/51, Report of the service Tenure Commissioners for 1870, p. 285.

47. A. C. Lawrie, **A Gazetteer of the Central Provinces** of Ceylon, 2 Vols. 1896 and 1898, Vol. I p; 194.

48. National Archives 5/63/101/–

මරක්කල මිනිසුන්ගෙන් ගත් රාජකාරීන්: එක් මිනිහෙක් අවුරුද්දට රිදී තුන බැගින් භය දෙනාගෙන් අවුරුද්දට රිදී දහඅටක් මුත්තෙටු වැඩට දෙනවාය. අවුරුද්දට දෙවතාවක් පෙනෙන්ඩ එනවාය. පැටවිලි කරන්ඩ නිසි දෙයක් කී තැනකට පැටවිලි කරනවාය. තෙල්දෙනියේ මරක්කල මිනිස්සු විහාරයට ලුනු දෙනවාය. වත්ත ප්‍රවේශන් කරනවාය. වෙනත් කී රාජකාරීන් කරනවාය.

49. A seruva is equal to 4 cupfuls.

50. A. C. Lawrie, **op. cit.** pp. 238 – 41

51. A. C. Lawrie, **op. cit.** p. 678.

52. PRO/CO/57/51 Report of the Service Tenure Commissioners. 1870, p. 285.

53. Knox, p. 136.

54. This was not merely a political strategy, although it did pay dividends. The same sort of generosity was shown by the Sinhala kings towards Christians, both Roman Catholics and Protestants even when they were political opponents.

55. Max Weber, **The Sociology of Religion,** London, 1965, p. 42.

56. **Niti Nighanduwa,** The Vocabulary of Law, translated by C. J. R. Le Mesurier and T. B. Panabokke, Colombo, 1880. p. 20.

57. L. S. Dewaraja, **op. cit.** p. 179.

58. A. C. Lawrie, **op.cit.** p. 678.

59. PRO/CO/416/20, ff. 375 - 79.

60. Secret Minutes of the Dutch Political Council 1762, edited and translated by J. H. O. Paulusz, Colombo 1954, p. 121.

61. **Ibid.**

62. **Ibid.** p. 120. The Nawab of the Carnatic was an ally of the British..

63. **Ibid.** p. 68.

64. **Memoir of Jan Schreuder for his successor, 1762.** translated by E. Reimers, Colombo, 1946, p. 25.

65. **Rev. James Cordiner, Description of Ceylon, Vol. I,** 1807, p. 139. He says that the Moors of Colombo spoke Portuguese, Sinhala and Tamil.

66. **Memoirs of Ryckloff van Goens 1663 – 75,** 1937, p. 18.

67. **University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon,** Vol. I, Part II, p. 707.

68. A. C. Lawrie, p. 934.

69. **op. cit.** p. 134.

70. **op.cit.** p. 561.

71. **Ibid.**

72. See page 16 above.

73. **D'Oyly's Diary,** p. 47.

74. A. Bertolacci, **A. View of Agricultural, Commercial** and Financial Interests of Ceylon, London, 1817. 43. Van Sanden, Sonaher, 2nd edition, Colombo 1926. p. 43.

75. E. B. Denham, **Ceylon at the Census of 1911.**

76. **Memoirs of Van Goens,** p. 18.

77. D'Oyly's Constitution, p. 52.

78. See page 2 above.

79. The Pybus Embassy, p. 36.

80. Quoted by S. Arasaratnam in the **Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studeis,** Vol. 6, Jan-June 1963, No.1, in his article entitled, "Vimala Dharma Suria II (1687 – 1707) and his relations with the Dutch."

81. Multi Ethnic Societies: The issues of Identity and Inequality by Frank G. Vallee, pp. 162 – 202 in **Issues in Canadian Society** by Forcese & Richer, Canada 1975.

82. **Ibid.**

83. John Pypus. p. 30

84. Cordiner, p. 38

85. Cordiner, p. 139.

86. Georg Simmel, **Conflict and the Web Group of Affiliations** Illinois, 1955, p. 106.

87. John Davy, p. 122.

88. **Secret Minutes,** p. 101

VIII

MUSLIM PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPORT SECTOR OF SRI LANKA 1800–1915

Ameer Ali

Between 1800 and 1915 the export sector of Sri Lanka or Ceylon, as she was known then, was initially the domain of the Colonial government and British entrepreneurs. Until the cinnamon monopoly was relaxed in 1829 and abolished four years later the Colonial administrators participated directly in overseeing the production and export of that staple. After the mid-1830s, when principles of laissez-faire and free enterprise coincided with the emergence and growth of a plantation economy, British entrepreneurs entered the country in large numbers and became the chief investors in the production and export of new staples such as, coffee, cinchona, tea, rubber and cocoa. This aspect of Sri Lanka's economic history has been adequately researched and recorded by Vanden Driesen and Rajaratnam.[1] As the 19th century rolled, some local entrepreneurs also entered the export arena and played their role in different capacities, as planters, professionals and traders. Of this indigenous participation, that of the Sinhalese community has been explored by Roberts,[2] and others. However, the participation of the Muslims who are popularly known as a business community in Sri Lanka has received only passing references in their works. The present paper is an attempt to fill this gap.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Sri Lanka's export sector was dominated by six items namely, cinnamon, arrack, pearls, tobacco, arecanuts and coconuts and coconut products. These could be described as the traditional exports of that time. After 1830s however, they began to lose their dominance and coffee became the king of exports until the middle 1880s, whereafter that too was superseded by others mainly, tea, rubber and cocoa. The collapse of the commercial importance of the traditional items can be seen by the fact that their total contribution to the export

earnings of the country shrank from an average of 85 per cent between 1807 and 1813 to an average of 20 per cent between 1895 and 1899.[3] In 1915 the percentage had dwindled even further to 18.[4] Of this reduced share the greatest contribution came from the export of coconuts and coconut products, which alone from the traditional articles of exports joined their modern counterparts in the latter half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In this total export enterprise the Muslim community contributed its share and played its role in various capacities. In doing so, the community also faced certain problems some of which are unique to itself. These and the extent of its participation will be surveyed in relation to each of the export items in the remainder of this paper.

Cinnamon

As long as the cinnamon monopoly was in force none other than the government and its employees could produce and trade in that article legally. This was true throughout the colonial era, beginning from the time of the Portuguese. However, history has recorded that there was a considerable amount of smuggling in cinnamon especially during the Dutch period, and that this illegal trade was carried on chiefly by the South Indian Muslims and Chetties with the connivance of Dutch officials.[5] It is also known that within the independent Kandyan Kingdom of medieval Sri Lanka, local Muslims were financed by the Kandyan treasury to trade on behalf of the king and his noblemen.[6] The Kandyan jungles also produced some quantity of cinnamon. If one ties up all this circumstantial evidence one cannot avoid the conclusion that the Muslims did trade in cinnamon despite the monopoly laws. Since they could not trade in the open market they did it in the black market, in which the stakes were obviously high.

The cinnamon monopoly was abolished in 1833. Among the reasons for its abolition was the declining profits caused partly by falling prices, which in turn resulted from increasing supply from numerous competitors.[7] Consequently, when the government plantations were sold to private individuals in 1840 some passed into the hands of wealthy Muslims,[8] though the exact acreage bought by them is not known. It is true that several of the lots sold in the vicinity of Colombo fell into the hands of speculators who converted them to building sites. But most of those lands sold outside the capital maintained cinnamon production. Thus by the end of the 19th century there was a total of about 33 to 36 thousand acres under cinnamon of which the Muslims owned only about 500 acres. These belonged to just four wealthy estate owners in Beruwela, Negombo and Moratuwa.[9]

Arrack

If Muslim participation in cinnamon production was minimal that in arrack was virtually zero. The reason for this was religious rather than economic. Islam's prohibition of intoxicants is too well known to be elaborated. Even as late as in 1915 a Muslim newspaper was giving prominence to a reader's letter to the editor, complaining that a certain Muslim in Colombo had rented out his coconut trees to a toddy tapper.[10] If letting trees for toddy tapping was considered irreligious then one can imagine the gravity of the social stigma that would have been attached to a Muslim liquor manufacturer and trader. It appears that the reason why Muslims did not enter into hoteliering business during our period was also because of the fear that they might have to permit the sale of liquor.

Pearls

Muslim participation in pearl exports cannot be isolated from the community's role in the entire business of pearl fishery. Even though this industry was also a government monopoly until 1833, the manner in which it was operated provided ample opportunities for Muslims to engage in the enterprise in various capacities. The government usually rented the fishing rights to speculators on condition that they fish within a predetermined area, for a specified number of days and with a stipulated number of boats.[11] Even after 1833 this system remained largely intact with the difference that instead of renting the right to fish, the government now hired the divers to work for it under official supervision and sold the oysters to pearl merchants through public auction.[12] A brief sketch of the entire operation will bring out the points at which the Muslims participated in this enterprise.

Before the actual commencement of the fishing season, the government inspected the respective pearl banks and collected samples of oysters in order to assess the prospects and profitability of the venture. The pearls collected from this sample were "sorted, classed and valued by an assembly of five or six native pearl dealers. . . . respectable Moormen, who consider(ed) it a compliment to be called to this service."[13] At the beginning this was performed gratuitously but later they were paid for their services. "Nobody understands the value of pearls and precious stones so well as they," wrote Wolf in 1785, ". . . and the persons who used to farm the pearl fishery, always rely on their skill on this article, as well as in arithmetic to inform them what they are to give for the whole fishery."[14] Even toward the end of our period pearl valuing appears to have been a special skill monopolized by the Muslims. For example, in each of the five mem-

ber committees of pearl valuers appointed in 1881 and 1905, all, except the Inspector of Pearl Banks and the Adigar, were Muslims.[15]

After assessing the prospects of the forthcoming season the government advertised the date for fishing. Before 1833 the renters were mostly South Indian Chetties, but after that and from 1850 there came a variety of merchants, among whom many were Muslims. In 1856 for example, of the 42 **kottus** – a Tamil word for a ground pit where oysters were dumped on a mat to rot and dry – allotted for pearl merchants 13 were taken by Muslims, of whom 9 were Indians, 3 from Mannar and one from Colombo.[16] In 1889, the Government Agent of Northern Province, reported that there were Chetties and Moorish merchants from Madura, Nagapatnam, Keelakkarai, Tondy and Adrampatnam – all South Indian towns, and from Colombo and Jaffna, who had come to participate in the fishery of that year.[17] He also regretted the absence of Muslim merchants from the South Indian town of Nagore, who were there in the previous year.[18] In 1905, of the three largest purchasers of oysters two were Muslims (one from Bombay and the other from Keelakkarai) and the third was a Chetty.[19] A year before that, there was a merchant from Mecca too.[20] While the bulk of these Muslims returned to their homeland when the season ended, a few remained in the island and became permanent residents.

A more important branch of this industry from the point of view of employment was diving for pearls. Hundreds of Muslims, both indigenous and foreign varieties were involved in this. In 1856 for instance, of the 323 boats which arrived at the fishing site with 678 merchants, 1926 divers and 4698 coolies, 19 came from Kalpitiya and 3 from Mannar all carrying Sri Lankan Muslims, while another 72 came from Keelakkarai, 24 from Tondy and 5 from Kayalpatnam carrying South Indian Muslims.[21] Four years later there were 200 boats from Keelakkarai alone.[22] In 1890, of a total of about 1300 to 1400 divers Muslims from Keelakkarai, Paumben and Tondy together counted 800 while another 200 Indian Muslims, mostly of Arab stock, came from Bombay.[23] In that year there were also 300 Sri Lankan Muslim divers, mostly from Erukkalampity and Mannar.[24] Again in 1903 out of a total 242 boats and 7408 divers 150 of the first and 3732 of the second arrived from Keelakkarai alone.[25] In the following year Muslims from that place so dominated the diving, they were described as the "backbone of the fishery."[26] Finally, in 1905 and 1906

there was a marked increase in the number of Arabs to 923 and 4090 respectively, out of a total 4991 in the first and 8368 in the second year.[27]

Culturally and historically Muslims have an ancient connection with pearl fishing. According to the Quran, "He it is Who has made the sea subservient that you may eat fresh fish from it, and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear."[28] Perhaps in keeping with the spirit of this verse Muslims took to pearl fishing from very early times. Tennent cites the Arab geographer Masudi's description of the habits of Arab Muslim pearl divers in the Persian Gulf in the 9th century.[29] As Islam spread, Muslims in other areas also took to pearl fishing and in Sri Lanka it became a vocation practised by members of that community right down to the end of our period. The expertise thus developed appears to have enabled Muslim divers to dive to greater depths and stay under water for long periods. Of the four groups that participated in diving namely, the Malayalees, Christian Tamils, Moors and Arabs, the last were rated as best, the Moors ranked second, the Tamils and Malayalees third and fourth respectively.[30]

Even though the Muslims shared widely in pearl fishery a large proportion of them were not Sri Lankans. Except for a small number of Mannar and Kalpitiya Muslims and a few from the Vannarponnai area in Jaffna, the rest came from either India or Persian Gulf. There were two reasons for this foreign dominance. Firstly, the Dutch discriminatory policies against the Muslims between 1650 and 1750 and the absence of frequent pearl fisheries during the Dutch regime made the local Muslims lose much of their skill in pearl fishing over a period of time; and secondly, the British practice of advertising contracts for pearl fishing in India helped wealthy traders there to submit tenders and recruit divers locally before setting out for Sri Lanka. What the local Muslims gained mostly from the fishery was the opportunity to trade with foreigners who arrived at the fishing site. Sometimes a crowd of 30,000 to 40,000[31] gathered at the place and remained there for a month or so until the season was over. A sandy desolated spot along the Mannar coast became a crowded town of merchants, divers, coolies and officers living in temporary huts and palm leaf sheds trying to maximise their earnings within a short space of time. Though trading was brisk, yet it was not the monopoly of the local community. There was stiff competition from South Indian Muslims. In 1856 for example of the 127 boutique allotments only 24 were taken by Sri Lankan Muslims. Of the rest, except for one which was allotted to a Pathan Muslim from Kabul, all were shared by Muslim traders from Tondy, Keelakkarai and Kayalpatnam.[32] The seasonal character of the

industry generally shortened the period of trading. But that short duration sometimes became even shorter as in 1858, because of outbreaks of epidemics.[33] Even otherwise the entire industry was of a speculative nature which depended on the availability of oysters. For some unknown reason, these oysters appeared and disappeared periodically and consequently the annual pearl fishing was seriously disrupted from time to time. Such disruption occurred several times in the 18th century and in the 19th there were disruptions from 1820 to 1828, from 1846 to 1849, in 1853, 1861, 1876 and from 1893 to 1896.[34]

Tobacco and Arecanuts

Tobacco was the staple product of the Jaffna peninsula and traditionally the Tamil community was the chief participant in the production, processing and trade of that crop. During the course of the 19th century however, tobacco cultivation was experimented in other parts of the island and by the end of that century an average extent of nearly 2800 acres in the North-Western Province and about 600 acres in the Western Province were annually brought under that article.[35] Nevertheless, Muslim involvement in its cultivation was of a limited order. A handful of Muslims in the Trincomalee District were said to have entered upon its cultivation.[36] But their total contribution to annual output remained insignificant. On the side of distribution however, there is evidence that some traded in that commodity. In 1888 for example, it was reported that Muslims from Beruwela travelled to Chilaw in the North-Western Province a month after the leaves were picked and bought part of the harvest at a price of Rs. 80.00 per 1000 leaves of the best variety and Rs. 5.00 per 1000 leaves of the worst.[37]

It was a different story in the case of the arecanuts. The product of the areca palm, was the chief medium through which the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka paid for their imports of grain and cloth from India for centuries. The Indian traders, both Muslims and Hindus, brought cloth and such other goods as were demanded, to the ports of Sri Lanka where they were bartered wholesale to local Muslim traders in exchange for arecanuts.[38] Despite the attempts by the Dutch to stop this traffic, "not from any design to profit by themselves, but with the determination even with the anticipation of a loss, to extinguish the commerce of the Moors;"[39] it continued though in restricted volume. With the departure of the Dutch this trade expanded rapidly and the magnitude attained by this activity in the village economy during the British period can be gauged from the

annual export statistics, which increased from less than 65,000 cwts. before 1850 to more than 100,000 cwts. in the 1890s.[40] In 1900 the country exported a total quantity of 114,000 cwts. valued at Rs. 1.6 million and in 1915 the volume increased to 172,000 cwts. and the value to Rs. 3.3 million[41] – both figures being an all time record. Though not all these exports passed through the hands of Muslim middlemen, a substantial quantity did. According to the 1911 census, there was a total of 850 Muslims earning their income from betel and arecanut trade, and they were only 18 per cent of the 4650 such earners in the country.[42] But a great majority of the total appears to be street vendors supplying betel and nuts to local consumers. The big dealers in that article were the **tavalam men** and town shop keepers who, though fewer in number than the street vendors, were drawn from the Muslim community.

The arecanut trade of the Muslims did not however continue entirely without problems. As early as 1802, the Kandyan Adigar Pilimatalawa stopped and harassed for political reasons, 71 Muslim traders from Puttalam and confiscated about 300 **amunams** of arecanuts which they had with them.[43] During the late 19th century problems of a different sort began to appear. In 1880s in particular, there were numerous complaints from the Sinhalese villagers of Kegalle, Ratnapura and Rambukkana that Moor traders from Kalutara and other low-country areas were settling down at the edge of the villages and encouraging "young blackguards" to steal their neighbours' produce.[44] The Muslims were also accused of encouraging the sale of unripened nuts which eventually led to a scarcity of ripened nuts during the season.[45] The village council in the Ratnapura District even ruled that the sale of unripened nuts was punishable by fine. But the fact that the Attorney General declared that ruling to be ultra vires allowed the evil to continue unabated.[46] Whether the Muslim traders did actually encourage the evils referred to was never proved, yet the popular belief was that they did and that belief helped to strain the racial harmony between the Sinhalese and Muslim communities which was worsened by other events at the turn of the century.

Thus within the traditional exports of the period Muslim participation varied both in degree and type. In the manufacture and sale of arrack they had no interest at all; in cinnamon and tobacco their participation was marginal and confined mostly to distribution; in arecanuts, although the main interest was in their trading, participation was considerable; and in pearl fishery the Muslims were its backbone, even though the group that benefited greatly from it was the Indian Muslims.

With the advent of the plantations after 1840, the Sri Lankan export sector underwent a radical change. With the exclusion of coconuts, the traditional export items lost their supremacy to new crops such as coffee, cinchona, tea, rubber and cocoa. The Muslims were quick to grab the economic opportunities opened by this change.

Coffee

Coffee is said to have been introduced to Sri Lanka by the early Arab traders, and it remained as a peasant crop until the advent of plantations in the 1840s. Significantly, this peasant product was collected in the villages by Muslim traders who brought it to Colombo and Galle to be bartered for cutlery, cotton goods and trinkets. After 1850 there were specialized agents who dealt in the export of peasant coffee, amongst whom were some Muslims who graduated beyond the stage of being mere collectors of the item and joined the ranks of active exporters. We know of at least two, Sinne Lebbe Bros. and Meeyapulle, both from Kandy, who had acquired that status. Of the latter, little is known except that his transactions in peasant coffee were so large in the mid-nineteenth century that he "practically ruled the market and fixed the price of coffee each day."[47] Meeyapulle appears to have concentrated mostly on the distribution of peasant coffee and showed little interest in cultivating the crop. Even though he owned a coffee estate in Dumbara, only one half of its 263 acres was under cultivation even in 1875, when plantation coffee reigned supreme.[48] The activities of Sinne Lebbe Bros. were very different. They not only traded in peasant coffee but also invested fairly heavily in the production of the plantation variety. In fact, Sinne Lebbe could be described as the first local Muslim proprietor of a coffee estate. His investment in plantation coffee expanded so rapidly that in 1865 he owned more than 15 estates with a total extent of over 6500 acres of which more than 2300 were under cultivation.[49] Either beacuse of or despite the extensive operations of his firm it collapsed in 1865.[50] Ten years later even Meeyapulle Marikkar appears to have gone out of coffee business since the **Ferguson's Ceylon Directory** of that year does not mention his name in its list of coffee dealers. However, during the days in which these two were in operation, it was "through their . . . hands much of the produce of the Central Province"[51] passed. Their disappearance did not mean the end of Muslim interest in coffee. In 1876 there was a total of 21 Muslim firms in Kandy alone which specialized in coffee business.[52] There was also 21 estates owned by at least 17 Muslim proprietors covering a total area of about 6300 acres.[53] Besides, there was another 1500 acres of small coffee gardens of less than 50 acres each belonging to Muslims of Central Province.

Cinchona, Tea, Rubber and Cocoa

When coffee culture collapsed in the 1880s Muslim proprietors also shared in its misfortune, but like many others they too came back strongly by diversifying their agricultural pursuits. The total acreage under these several crops (including coffee) in Muslim hands increased from 3300 in 1868–69 to 6000 in 1875, dropped to 3800 in 1885 and again increased to 5400 in 1893 and to 11,900 in 1919–20.[54] Of the final figure nearly 7200 acres were under tea, rubber and cocoa. But even here as with coffee the Muslims in general were more interested in the trading aspect of commercial agriculture than in the cultivation and processing of the crops. Such returns as are available describe the situation in 1919,[55] but there is no reason to believe that conditions were different at the end of our period in 1915. The returns show that 14 out of 81 rubber dealers in Colombo and 23 out of 31 in Kandy were Muslims. In Matale and Kegalle there were four Muslim rubber dealers each out of 11 in the first and 7 in the second. Similarly in cocoa trade 46 of the 68 dealers in the Kandy District were Muslims. They were 8 out of 16 in Matale, 17 out of 19 in Kegalle and 4 out of 5 in Kurunegala. It is not possible to get similar data for tea dealers amongst the Muslims.

From these several statistics it is not possible to account for the participation of Indian Muslims in the activities of the cash crops sector. Nevertheless, the census statistics of 1911 throw some light on this problem. Leaving aside cinchona and coconuts for the moment, of which the former had dwindled in importance to insignificance after 1900 and the latter is dealt with separately in the following section, tea, rubber and cocoa were the chief earners of export revenue at the end of our period. The total number of Muslim earners who were engaged directly in the cultivation of these crops were 5235 of whom 2874 or more than 50 per cent were of the Indian variety. But a great majority of the latter were involved as labourers and other subordinates rather than as owners, managers and superior staff of those plantations. While among the Sri Lankan Muslims a total of 861 or nearly 37 per cent were of the latter group those among the Indian variety was only 89 or 3 per cent.

This difference demands explanation. The cultivation of the commercial crops was technically labour intensive and required constant care and supervision from the producers. That was not something which the Indian Muslims who were birds of passage could afford. They looked for short term profits and therefore bacame labourers in estates and traders in the final product; whereas the indigenous Muslims although preferred trading, yet being permanent residents also ventured into the actual cultivation of the crops.

Just as in the arecanut trade, so also in the case of the new export staples there were complaints that Muslims were dealing in stolen products. While complaints about arecanut theft came from small scale village producers these new charges arose mainly from the planting sector. Consequently, in 1905 the government appointed the Praedial Products Thefts Commission[56] to investigate the problem. The Commission issued a questionnaire to 340 proprietors of whom 145 responded with replies. Of these, 54 said that they did not experience any theft, and of the remaining 91, fifty implicated the Muslims as the culprits. But there were also some who apportioned the blame between the Muslims and a newly emerging group of Low-country Sinhalese traders. The Commission however concluded "that the theft of praedial products generally is much less extensive than has been supposed and that the losses sustained would not at present justify the introduction of any measure which might tend to hamper legitimate trade, or cause trouble and annoyance to producers and purchasers generally."[57] Accordingly no action was taken as a result of the report. In any case there had been specific cases where Muslim traders were caught and punished by Police Magistrates not for stealing but for receiving stolen products.[58] Such incidents caused by a few, added colour to an already eroded image of the community and led to serious consequences in 1915.

Coconuts

Of the several cash crops, that which attracted the Muslims most was coconut. In the mid-19th century they were "almost the only section of the native population who divide(d) this valuable culture with the English."[59] Although by the end of our period the Muslim share was only 12,000 of the 330,000 acres under this crop,[60] yet, the fact that 12,000 was more than the total acreage held by Muslims in all other export crops proves their preference for coconut. In areas such as Puttalam the community was said to have been "too much engrossed in coconut cultivation."[61] The census statistics of over 2500 Muslim earners in coconut production in 1901 and over 4000 in 1911 were also the highest figures for the community in comparison to the total number of such earners in other crops. Leading Muslim personalities of the time such as O.L.M. Macan Markar, S.L. Naina Marikar, A.M. Sheriff and W.M. Abdul Rahman, invested part of their capital in coconut plantations.[62]

The reasons for the community's preference for coconut culture are not far to seek. The colonial impression was that coconut cultivation fitted well into the slow moving life style of the indigenous population. According to one English language newspaper of the time "it suits the genius

of a people who are slow and patient; it answers their means as it does not call for large initial expenditure, and close attention thereafter; if its returns are tardy they are tolerably sure."[63] But the Muslims took to coconuts not because the latter was suitable to a slow moving life style which was not true of the Muslim way of life, but because of the economic advantages that culture promised. A tolerably sure profit with less care and low initial outlay meant that the enterprising Muslim did not have to divert a substantial portion of his resources from other ventures. Hence he showed a keen interest in coconut cultivation as a side-line. Moreover there was also a fortunate coincidence between the suitability of soil for coconut on the one hand and the places of settlement of the Muslims on the other. Coconut was mainly a coastal crop and the Muslims were also mostly coastal settlers. Puttalam, Mannar and Batticaloa, are coastal districts which are fertile for coconut cultivation and which have a large concentration of Muslim population. Even Kurunegala, the most fertile coconut district of all is only about 50 miles north-east of Colombo and has a substantial Muslim settlement. Thus the community realized these advantages long before the others and that was why as Tennent observed, they were almost the only people before 1850 who shared that culture with the British on a commercial basis.

All in all, Muslim participation in the plantation sector was not impressive. Ferguson's Directory summarizes the non-European interests in that sector as follows: "Under the stimulus of European example and capital, native gardens have greatly extended . . . About 300 Sinhalese, about 50 Chetties, some 40 Moors and Malays, 4 Parsees, 50 Burghers and 75 Tamils own regular plantations in tea, rubber, cocoa etc. aggregating 120,000 acres of land of 75,000 acres are cultivated."[64] According to the 1911 census statistics, even with regard to total employment in this sector the Muslim share was only about 5 per cent yet, these figures are significant because they show without any shadow of doubt that the Muslim community was diversifying its economic interests as early as the mid-19th century and was getting far away from the popular image that it was totally a business community.

Gems.

Despite Sri Lanka's legendary fame for its precious stones, none of the Colonial powers showed any interest in developing that industry. During our period John Davy observed that "like mining in general the occupation of searching for gems is a very precarious one"[65] and therefore not "a profitable pursuit."[66] To the Colebrook Commissioners, "the gems of Ceylon. . . (were) the least important of its mineral productions."[67] Even Tennent found that only "persons of worst-regulated habits . . . (were)

continuously engaged in this exciting and precarious trade."[68] He also noticed that because of the gem industry "serious demoralization is engendered by the idle and desolute adventurers who resort to Saffragam. Systematic industry suffers, and the cultivation of the land is frequently neglected whilst its owners are absorbed in these speculative and tantalising occupation."[69] The idea that gemming was a precarious and speculative venture together with the ruling philosophy of non-interference in private enterprise prompted the Colonial government to be satisfied with the limited revenue it received from the licences issued to gem miners.

Nonetheless, as one later report on gem trade remarked, "it [was in] this very uncertainty. . . (that there lay) the romance of the industry."[70] From the very beginning of our period it was the Muslims who enjoyed this romance more than anyone else. As early as 1817 Bertolacci observed that the gem trade was "entirely in the hands of the Muslims"[71] and four years later Davy wrote, that though the number engaged in the industry was "not very numerous" yet they were "chiefly Moormen"[72] Nevertheless they did not monopolize every branch of that industry. In fact the actual mining for gems was done mostly by the Sinhalese. They either mined independently and sold their findings to Muslim middlemen or worked for wages in pits owned by Muslims under the close supervision of the latter. "It is a curious sight", says Cumming, "to see the keen, eager faces of Moormen to whom most of the gem-pits belong, and who sit perched on raised seats overlooking the great troughs wherein a long row of coolies (all naked) are sifting and washing the gravel, which, perchance, may yield some priceless gem, only to be recognized in its rough exterior by experienced eyes, but which a clever coolie would detect as quickly as his master, so that the latter needs to practise keen vigilance to prevent any attempt at concealment of the treasure-trove."[73] While the Southern Sinhalese mined for wages those of Sabaragamuwa did it independently by forming **karuhaulas,** a system by which a number of miners jointly worked in a pit and then shared the finding.[74] Of a total 496 earners categorized as "gem diggers" by the 1911 census report, there were 411 Sinhalese, 76 Muslims and the rest Tamils.

The stones that were mined by the Sinhalese were sold either privately or through public auction to middlemen who were mostly Muslims. From this point onwards it was they who dominated the industry. The market value of a gem was often beyond the knowledge of a miner who measured the value "by the prices realized at gem auctions at which the competitive elements were absent.[75] The Muslim buyers at the auction usually formed a ring and through "a secret code in which finger play, nods of the

head and eye movements played a part,"[76] refrained from bidding against each other and thereby kept the market prices of raw stones very low. After purchasing the stones their values were enhanced by cutting and polishing in which the Muslims virtually had no competition in the island during our period. This skill was not acquired through formal learning but through tradition handed down from generation to generation. Moreover those who acquired the skill refused to teach it to a non-Muslim. A person who desired to learn had to become an apprentice under a reputable cutter, "but unless his heritage stamp(ed) him as a Muslim he (had) no entree."[77]

The techniques used by the Muslim cutters and polishers, though the best available in Sri Lanka at that time, fell far short of international standards. Their tools were "so primitive and their skill so deficient that a gem generally (lost) its value by having passed through their hands;"[78] and because of the lack of brilliancy and proper shape the gems exported to Europe had to be recut and polished in the European lapidaries. The Muslim cutters were found sacrificing brilliancy and style for size and weight. Despite this drawback they remained as the unchallenged masters of this art during our period.

After cutting and polishing the stones were passed to the jewellers and gem traders in the cities who either exported them abroad or sold directly to the local rich and foreign tourists. The profits earned were phenomenal. For example, a sapphire mined, cut and polished by C. M. Hasana Marikar of Rakwana in 1881 was estimated to fetch £ 10,000 or about Rs. 100,000;[79] and in 1887 an alexandrite weighing 1867 carats was sold by a Muslim from Weligama for Rs. 12,000.[80] The cost price in both cases was well below Rs. 100/- each. It is difficult to estimate the actual amount of profit earned by the Muslim gem miners. The Ceylon Blue Books statistics for instance do not reveal the actual amount earned through the export of gems. "A portion only appears," Tennent said, "even of those sent to England, the remainder being carried away by private parties."[78] However, he computed that the annual value of the quantity of precious stones found in the island at that time was about £ 10,000.[81] The highest figure of the export value of gems recorded by the **Ceylon Blue Books** in the 19th century was Rs. 76,000 in 1899, but according to some other sources, in 1890 alone the sale of gems brought 10 million rupees into the country.[82]

Conclusion:

Between 1800 and 1915, the export sector of Sri Lanka underwent a radical change marked by the advent of the plantation economy in the

1840s. The Muslim Community participated actively in the export sector both before and after the transition. The extent of their participation and the manner in which they did varied, depending partly on the political and administrative rules governing the various export items, partly on the economic profitability promised by the different articles and partly on the religious values that generally governed a Muslim life. Overall theirs was an enterprising contribution to the 19th century economic development of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, there were problems confronting the community which arose partly from competition from foreigners and partly from the local reaction to Muslim economic dominance. These problems kept on adding to undermine the image of the Muslims which eventually culminated in the Sinhalese-Muslim racial riots of 1915, a subject treated by the author elsewhere. (83)

NOTES

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2. M. W. Roberts, "Elite Formation and Elites 1832-1931" in **University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon**, vol. 3, 1973; K. M. de Silva, **A History of Lanka**, Oxford University Press, 1981, Ch. 24.

3. The former was computed from statistics in A. Bertolacci, **A View of Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon**, London, 1817, pp. 520-549; and the latter from the **Ceylon Blue Books.**

4. **Ceylon Blue Books**, 1915.

5. S. Arasaratnam, "Dutch Commercial Policy in Ceylon and its Effects on the Indo-Ceylon Trade (1690-1750)" **The Indian Economic and Social History Review**, 4(2) 1967.

6. John Davy, **An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and its Inhabitants with Travels in the Island**, (1821), Ceylon, 1969 reprint, p. 93; L. S. Dewaraja, **The Kandyan Kingdom 1707-1760**, Colombo, 1972, p. 87.

7. Colvin R. de Silva, "The British Monopoly of Cinnamon", **The Ceylon Literary Register**, 1933/34; Vijaya Samaraweera, "Cinnamon Trade of Ceylon," **The Indian Economic and Social History Review**, 8(4), 1971.

8. **Ceylon Almanac,** 1857.

9. **Fergusons Ceylon Directory,** 1885/1886.

10. The **Ceylon Muhammadan,** 31 Jan. 1915.

11. James Stewart, **An Account of the Pearl Fisheries in Ceylon,** Cotta, Church Mission Press, 1843, p. 9 ff.

12. **Ibid.**

13. **Op. cit.** p. 11.

14. **Ibid.**

15. **Ceylon Sessional Paper** (C.S.P.), no. 11 of 1881 and no. 33 of 1905.

16. Ceylon National Archives (C.N.A.), 31/18, Mannar Kachcheri diary, 1856.

17. **C. S. P.** no 24 of 1889.

18. **Ibid.**

19. **C. S. P.** no 33 of 1905.

20. **Ibid.**

21. C. N. A. 31/18, Mannar Kachcheri diary, 1856.

22. C. N. A. 31/25, Mannar Kachcheri diary, 1860.

23. **C. S. P.** no. 37 of 1890.

24. **Ibid.**

25. **C. S. P.** , no. 34 of 1903.

26. **C. S. P.**, no. 13 of 1904.

27. **Ceylon Administration Reports** (C.A.R.), 1905 and 1906, Asst. Colonial Secretary J. S. Smith's report on the Blue Books.

28. **Al Quran,** 16:14, **Al-Nahl.**

29. J. E. Tennent, **Ceylon, on Account of the Island: Physical, Historical and Topographical with Notices of its Natural History,** London, 1960, vol, II, pp. 563-564.

30. Arnold Wright (ed.), **Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon,** 1907, p.232; W. A. Herdman, **Report to the Government of Ceylon on the Pearl Oyster Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar,** London, 1905, Vol. III, pp. 11-15.

31. **C. A. R.** 1905, Smith's report as the Blue Book of 1905.

32. C. N. A. 31/18, Mannar Kachcheri diary.

33. **Ibid.**

34. J. E. Tennent, **op.cit.,** vol.II, p; 561; **C.S.P.,** no. 32 of 1907.

35. Calculated from Blue Books figures 1891-1900.

36. **C.A.R.,** 1889, report of Neville, actg. Asst. Govt. Agent of Trincomalee District.

37. **C. A. R.,** 1888, report of Noyes, Asst. Govt. Agent of Chilaw District.

38. S. Arasaratnam, **Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1687,** Djampatau, n. v. 1958, p. 148.

39. J. E. Tennent, **op.cit.,**vol. II, p. 53.

40. J. Ferguson, **All About Areca Palm (Betel Nut),** Colombo, 1897, pp. 4-5.

41. **Ceylon Blue Book,** 1900 & 1915.

42. **Census of Ceylon,** 1911, vol. III.

43. Colonial Office, (C.O.), 54/7, North to Hobart, 16 Mar. 1802. Some of the original documents relating to this incident appear in T. Vimalananda, **The British Intrigue in the Kingdom of Ceylon,** Colombo, 1973, pp. 148-167.

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45. C. N.A., 45/18, Ratnapura Kachcheri diaries, 23 Apr. 1884 and 9 Nov. 1884; C. N. A. , 45/17, 2 July 1883.

46. C. N. A. 45/18, Ratnapura Kachcheri diaries, 23 Apr. 1884.

47. P. M. Bingham, **The History of the Public Works Department, Ceylon 1796-1913,** Colombo, 1921-23, vol. II, p. 233.

48. **Ferguson's Ceylon Directory,** 1866-68 and 1875.

49. For a full list of his estates, their extent and crops planted in them, see the advertisement in **The Examiner,** 15 Feb. 1865.

50. The court documents regarding this firm's insolvency and the reasons for its collapse cannot be traced. All we have is the serial number of the case, D. C. Kandy 167 and a reference to it **in Ramanathan Reports 1863-1868,** p. 204.

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52. **Ferguson's Ceylon Directory,** 1876.

53. **Op.cit.** 1875.

54. **Op.cit.,** 1868-69, 1875, 1885, 1893 & 1919-20.

55. **Op.cit.,** 1919–20.

56. **C.S.P.,** no. 26 of 1895.

57. **Ibid.**

58. **C. A. R.,** 1892, report of J. H. Eaton, Police Magistrate cited in the annual report of G. S. Saxton, actg. Asst. Govt. Agent of Matale.

59. J. E. Tennent, **op.cit.,** vol. II, p. 458.

60. **Ferguson's Ceylon Directory,** 1919-20. Including the non-estate coconut lands there was a total acreage of nearly 850,000 (p.xxxvii). But according to the **Blue Book** of 1919 that figure is exceeded by another 70,000.

61. **C. A. R.,** 1906, report of R. N. Thaine, Asst. Govt. Agent of Puttalam.

62. See the list of coconut estates in **Ferguson's Ceylon Directory,** 1919-20.

63. **The Examiner,** 21 Apr. 1888.

64. **Ferguson's Ceylon Directory,** 1919-20, p: xxxiv.

65. John Davy, **op.cit.,** p. 194.

66. **Ibid.**

67. C. N. A. 4/18, the Colebrook Commissioner's report, 24 Dec. 1831. p. 8.

68. J. E. Tennent, **op.cit.** vol. I, p. 38.

69. **Ibid.**

70. **C. S. P.,** no. 16 of 1939.

71. A. Bertolacci, **op. cit.,** p. 194.

72. John Davy, **op.cit.,** p. 194.

73. C. F. G. Cumming, **Two Happy Years in Ceylon,** London, 1901, pp. 315-316.

74. **C. S. P.,** no. 16 of 1939.

75. **Ibid.**

76. **Ibid.**

77. **Ibid.**

78. J. E. Tennent, **op.cit.,** vol. I, p.39.

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80. **C. A. R.,** 1887, report of H. P. Baumgartner, Asst. Govt. Agent of Matara.

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82. W. Balendra, "The Heritage of Islam and its Contributions to Lanka's Civilization," **Moorish Culture,** Colombo (not dated); Marzook Burhan, "Contribution from early times of the Moors of Lanka to the National life of our country," **M. I. C. H. Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1944-1969,** Colombo, 1970, p. 95; **Sri Lanka's Muslim Youth,** a Y. M. M. A. publication, Colombo, 1976, unpaginated.

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IX

THE MUSLIM MINORITY OF SRI LANKA: A BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION

S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe and Fazal Davood

The origins of Sri Lanka's Muslim community is usually traced back to Arab traders who participated in the country's external trade. In addition, Sri Lanka was also used as an **entrepot** trading centre in the Indian Ocean. It is believed that by the late thirteenth century they controlled a large proportion of trade between India and Sri Lanka and that by the sixteenth century Muslim settlements were found on the Western and South Western coasts of the island.[1] This close historical association between the Sri Lankan Muslims and business activities has continued up to the present. Indeed, even today the popular image of the Sri Lankan Muslim community is that of "businessmen" and, often, 'rich' businessmen at that.

Theoretical perspectives

This historical image and popular attitude to the Sri Lankan Muslim community raises the question whether this community also fits into the "Middlemen minorities in self-employment" model which has been developed in relation to minority ethnic groups such as the Jews, Overseas Chinese, Japanese, Armenians and so on in the USA, the Ibo of Nigeria, the Chinese in Southeast Asia and the Asians in East Africa.[2] The basic point made in most of these writings[3] is that despite the general tendency for the incidence of self-employment to decline due to capitalist development, self-employment especially in trade and business persists among certain ethnic minorities.

The theoretical explanations available for this phenomena can be broadly divided into two groups. One which can be called the 'cultural theory of entrepreneurship' emphasizes certain socio-cultural and psychological

characteristics found in the minorites as being responsible for their persistence in self-employment especially in small business.[4] Cultural resources such as the social network, personal trust, loyalties, mutual obligations are said to be helpful in promoting ethnocentric economic life.

The second group of explanations are "situational" theories. These are 'contextual' explanations that stress not the cultural characteristics of the minority in question but their relative situation in the larger society. For example, ethnic trading communities who are sojourners are said to show a situational response to their circumstances by way of hard work, thrift and clannishness because of their desire to return home after accumulating as much wealth as possible. Another variant of the same theory stresses the disadvantages that a particular ethnic group might suffer in the labour market, thereby pushing them into self-employment. These disadvantages could range from pure and simple racial discrimination to lack of suitable qualifications for employment in the formal 'organized' economy to sheer shortage of jobs as in over-populated cities in the third world. The important point to note about these situational theories is that they assume that when the situation changes the 'middleman minorities' will also disappear.

In the literature there has been an attempt to synthesize the cultural theory and the disadvantage theory.[5] It has been pointed out that certain disadvantaged ethnic groups may also possess the cultural attributes that help them succeed in certain occupation, especially business. In the present paper we analyse the economic conditions of the contemporary Muslim community in Sri Lanka using such a synthesized theoretical approach. In the first part of the paper we have tried to construct, using whatever data that is available, a socio-economic profile of the contemporary Muslim community in Sri Lanka. Wherever possible comparative data is used to compare the economic circumstances of the Muslims with those of the non-Muslims. In the second part of the paper we extend the more general account of the first part by probing in greater depth the nature of business activities of the Muslim community. In the concluding section, based on an analysis of the factual material described earlier, certain inferences are made.

Sources of data and methodology

There is a general paucity of data on the economic life of the contemporary Muslim community of Sri Lanka. The **Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finances** (1953, 1963, 1973 and 1978) conducted by the Central Bank contains some information by ethnic category. However, it is observed

that in the later survey reports information on ethnicity has been very limited. For example, in the 1978 survey, information on the basis of ethnicity has been limited to six tables. Of course, one might feel that the ethnic division should be de-emphasized in official publications. But experience shows that ignoring ethnicity will not make the ethnic issue disappear. Indeed, given the current ethnic situation in Sri Lanka where misinformation and the sheer lack of accurate information causes more harm than good, it is better to provide the public with accurate and authoritative information on the ethnic issue. Moreover, at a time when there is much discussion about adopting ethnic quotas and shares as official policy, the need for such information becomes all the more important.

Data on Sri Lanka's Muslim business community and professional have been obtained from two sources, the **Ferguson's Directory** and a sample survey of 51 businessmen conducted by the authors. The Ferguson's Directory listings of the company sector and those in certain professions are comprehensive but not complete.

The sample survey of the present authors was not a random survey in the strict scientific sense. There was no basic information to determine the size and nature of the total population ("Muslim businessmen"). Hence, we selected a sort of 'purposive' sample based on our personal knowledge and experience of the Muslim business community. In the respect the willingness on the part of the informants to supply accurate information was an important consideration. When the principal activity is taken into account, in the sample, retail and wholesale trades accounted for 25%, imports and exports other than gem 32%, gem trade 15%, manufactory 25%, tourism and travel 3%. The legal form of the enterprises were 20 (39%) sole proprietorships, 18 (35%) partnerships and 13 (26%) private limited liability companies. They were an urban based sample located entirely in Colombo (92%) and Kandy (8%). Moreover, they were mainly relatively big businessmen. These factors introduce certain biases to our sample which should be borne in mind when the data is interpreted.

PART I

A GENERAL SOCIO–ECONOMIC PROFILE

Demography

Today Muslims number about 1.2 million in Sri Lanka's population of 15.1 million. Since regular censuses began in Sri Lanka in 1881, the percentage of Muslims in the country's population has fluctuated between 3.7% (1881) and 7.4% (1981) (Table I). Broadly speaking they are only 1/10 of the majority Sinhalese community and 2/5 of the Tamil (Jaffna plus 'Indian') community.

TABLE I
MUSLIM POPULATION IN SRI LANKA

	1881	1901	1946	1963	1981
Total Population('000)	2759.7	3565.9	6657.3	10582	14850
Muslim Population ('000)	193.4	239.9	431.7	720	1134.5
Percentage	3.7	5.7	6.5	6.8	7.41

Source: Census & Statistics Department (DCS), **Censuses on Population and Housing.**

The Sri Lankan Muslim community is united by their adherence to Islam. However, there are significant sub-ethnic divisions. (Table II). The vast majority are Sri Lankan Muslims whose origins are obscured in antiquity. The others, however, are identified by their place of origin abroad, Malays (Malaysia), Indian Moors (South India), Borahs (North India) and Memons (North India). All these groups except the Borahs are sunni Muslims. The Borahs are Shia Muslims.

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF MUSLIM SUB-ETHNIC GROUPS

	1981	%
Ceylon Moors	1,056,972	93.16
Indian Moors	29,406	2.59
Malays	43,378	3.83
Borahs	1,800	0.16
Memons	3,000	0.26
Total	1,134, 556	100

Source: Census & Statistics Department (DCS), **Census on Population & Housing** 1981 and Personal Communications with Muslim Organizations by the authors.

The Muslims do not account for an absolute majority (50% plus one) of the population in any of Sri Lanka's 24 revenue districts. However, in one district, Amparai in the Eastern Province they are the largest single ethnic group and account for 41.6% (1981) of the population (Table III). In three other districts, Trincomalee (29.1%), Mannar (28.1%) and Batticaloa (24.0%), the Muslims account for more than a fifth of the population of the district. However, it is useful to note that these three districts plus Amparai account for only about 1/3 of the total Muslim population. The remaining 2/3 are scattered over the island with more conspicuous concentrations in the western coastal districts of Colombo, Kalutara and Puttalam and in Kandy in the central highlands.

The available figures also show that the Muslim community is much more urbanized than the Sinhalese and Tamils. In 1963 38.9% of the Muslims were reported to be living in urban areas when the national average was less than 20%.[6]

The relatively small size of the Muslim community as well as their scatter over the island and their greater urban bias are of some economic significance. The greater degree of urbanization among the Muslims is related to their preference for business and trade. Given their propensity to be in business activity, the relatively small population does not permit them to

engage in many other activities. Thus, the **impression** is created that the Muslims are anxious to engage and control business. Moreover, in any given geographical area there are practical limits to the scope for trade and business. Thus, the small Muslim business communities tend to become quite conspicuous. Of course, it is also plausible that one factor which led to the islandwide scatter and the urban settlement of the Muslim population is their migration in search of trading opportunities.

TABLE III
POPULATION OF SRI LANKA AND MUSLIMS
DISTRICTWISE

District	Total Population	Muslim Population	Percentage of Muslims
Sri Lanka	14,850,001	1,134,556	7.64
Colombo	1,698,322	168,956	9.95
Kalutara	827,189	62,781	7.59
Kandy	1,126,296	125,646	11.15
Matale	357,441	26,603	7.44
Nuwara Eliya	522,219	15,791	3.02
Galle	814,579	26,359	3.23
Matara	644,231	16,853	2.61
Hambantota	424,102	9,333	2.20
Jaffna	831,112	14,169	1.70
Mannar	106,940	30,079	28.13
Vavuniya	95,904	6,764	7.05
Batticaloa	330,899	79,662	24.07
Ampara	388,786	161,754	41.60
Trincomalee	256,790	75,761	5.29
Kurunegala	1,212,755	64,213	5.29
Puttalam	493,344	50,246	10.18
Anuradhapura	587,822	43,801	7.45
Polonnaruwa	262,753	17,621	6.71
Badulla	642,893	28,759	4.47
Moneragala	279,743	5,750	2.06
Ratnapura	796,468	15,441	1.94
Kegalle	682,411	36,548	5.35
Gampaha	1,389,490	47,850	3.44
Mullaitivu	77,512	3,816	4.92

Source: Department of Census & Statistics (DCS), **Census on Population & Housing 1981**, Colombo.

TABLE IV
ANNUAL AVERAGE GROWTH RATE OF POPULATION (%)

	1881-1891	1901-1911	1946-1953	1963-1971	1971-1981
All Races	0.9	1.4	2.8	2.2	1.7
Muslims	0.7	1.6	3.0	3.5	3.2

Source: Department of Census & Statistics (DCS), **Population Censuses of Sri Lanka**, 1981.

The inter-censal growth rate of the Muslim population has consistently exceeded the national population growth rate. (Table IV). There is also some evidence to show the reluctance of Muslims to accept family planning and birth control methods.

Education

The Sri Lankan Muslims have long been identified as an educationally backward community. (Table V). Their main interest, it was said, was in business and not in education. In broad terms this is true but the situation is rapidly changing. In 1973 illiteracy among the Muslims was second only to the Indian Tamils (Table VI). In terms of general educational attainment Muslims (excluding the Malays, Borahs and Memons) as a community are above the Indian Tamils but below the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils. In the early 1950s proportionally more Muslims were found without any schooling than members of any other community bar the Indian Tamils.

TABLE V
EDUCATION LEVEL BY COMMUNITIES – 1953, 1963 and 1978/79

	Moors and Malays	All Communities
No Schooling		
1953	49.8	41.6
1963	42.2	36.6
1973	36.9	32.2
1978/79	27.1	24.3
Primary		
1953	43.1	46.8
1963	39.1	39.2
1973	39.6	37.9
1978/79	43.1	38.9
Secondary		
1953	5.5	9.8
1963	15.3	19.6
1973	19.6	23.9
1978/79	22.7	26.4
Passed G.C.E. (O/L) /SSC		
1953	0.3	0.9
1963	2.8	3.4
1973	3.5	5.3
1978/79	6.3	8.8
Above G.C.E. (O/L)/SSC		
1953	1.3	0.9
1963	0.4	1.1
1973	0.4	0.7
1978/79	0.6	1.4

Source: Census & Statistics Department (DCS), **Census of Population & Housing, Sri Lanka, 1981.**

This situation, however, changed rapidly in the last two or three decades. There were two main reasons. One was the change in the attitude of the Muslim community towards education. For example, in our field survey we found that out of the 51 businessmen questioned only 17% were not particular about their children's education but simply stressed the importance of them taking to business. Nearly 3/4 of the businessmen wanted their children to take to business but only after a proper education and the remaining 10% were keen to see their children enter the professions. It was also interesting to note that most businessmen felt that without a proper education, the next generation of Muslim businessmen would not be able to withstand the competition in business coming from business rivals.

The second reason for the education progress of the Muslim community in recent years has been the rapid development of educational facilities for Muslim children. In 1980 7.1% of the schools in this country catered to Muslim children and 7.4% of the school population were Muslims (Table VII). These percentages approximate the Muslim share of the population. Thus, by 1979 the percentage of Muslims without any schooling was not significantly different to similar categories in the Sinhalese and Jaffna Tamil communities.

Muslim representation in post-secondary and higher education, however, has been lagging behind. In 1978-79 only 0.7, of the Muslim population

TABLE VI
ILLITERACY RATE BY COMMUNITY – 1973

Community	%
Kandyan Sinhalese	30.14
Low Country Sinhalese	23.77
Moors and Malays	34.6
Indian Tamils	44.5
Ceylon Tamils	29.7
All Island	28.95

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, **Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finances 1973**, Colombo.

(Table VII) had a post-secondary education in contrast to 1.4% of the overall population. The admission of Muslims to the Universities has also generally lagged behind their proportion in the population. For example, in the new admissions for 1982-83 Muslims account for only 5.0% overall.. This deficiency in higher education is in turn reflected in the relatively low representation of Muslims in some of the key professions.

Employment

In 1980 in a total workforce of 5.5 million 278,000 (5.9%) were Muslims.[7] This is significantly below the percentage of Muslims in Sri Lanka's total population. The crude activity rate for Muslims in 1978 was only 26.98% (Table VIII) which was the lowest for any ethnic group and was well below the national average of 36.02.[8] The reason for the relatively low contribution of the Muslims to the labour force is explained mainly by the low participation rate of Muslim females due to certain social and cultural constraints. In 1980-81 only about 1.7 per cent of the Muslim females in the age cohort 10 years and over were in the labour force whereas the all-island average for the total female population was 20.0%.[9]

TABLE VII
CLASSIFICATION OF STUDENTS BY COMMUNITY – 1980

	No.	%
Sinhalese	2561500	78.0
Tamils	463686	14.1
Muslims	249261	7.6
Others	6340	0.4
Total	3280787	100.0

ETHNIC CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLS – 1980

	No.	%
Sinhalese	6867	75.5
Tamils	1601	17.5
Muslims	649	7.1
Total	9117	100.0

Source: Department of Education, **School Census 1980** Colombo 1981.

Note: The ethnic classification is based on majority attendance.

TABLE VIII
CRUDE ACTIVITY RATES

	1963 %	1978/79 %
Moors	26.6	26.98
Malays	26.9	32.29
All Island	31.7	38.02

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, **Consumer Finance Survey 1963 and 1978/79.**

TABLE IX
EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE AMONG MUSLIMS – 1973

		Muslims		All Communities	
		No.	%	No.	%
1.	Services	179	41.7	1470	19.79
	1.1 Working proprietors wholesale and retail trades	(78)	(18.18)	(267)	(3.59)
	1.2 Salesmen and demonstrators	(43)	(10.02)	(143)	(1.92)
2.	Agriculture	152	35.44	4134	55.65
	2.1 General Farmer	(92)	(21.44)	(1808)	(24.33)
3.	Mining and quarrying	2	0.47	39	.52
4.	Manufacturing and other related activities	96	22.39	1786	24.04
		429	100.00	7429	100.00

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, Colombo. **Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finances, 1973, Part II.**

TABLE X
EMPLOYMENT BY COMMUNITY – ALL ISLAND

Percentage of Labour Force in the Community

	Self-Employed		Employer		Employee		Unpaid family worker		Total employed	
	1973	1978/79	1973	1978/79	1973	1978/79	1973	1978/79	1973	1978/79
Kandyan Sinhalese	32.6	24.62	1.2	1.07	33.3	40.12	9.9	20.33	77.0	86.14
Low Country Sinhalese	23.1	18.80	1.0	1.57	42.3	52.17	3.5	8.97	8.2	81.51
Ceylon Tamils	24.2	27.52	0.9	0.95	50.6	51.78	6.6	8.96	82.3	89.21
Indian Tamils	2.4	1.80	0.5	0.17	84.3	91.54	0.5	0.87	87.7	94.38
Moors	34.4	25.16	3.2	2.58	38.3	50.58	2.8	7.87	78.7	86.19
Malays	–	9.72	–	1.39	56.5	63.89	–	4.17	56.5	79.17
Burghers	12.1	3.23	3.0	0.0	63.6	67.74	–	0.0	78.7	70.97
Others	–	33.33	–	0.0	71.4	66.67	–	0.0	71.4	100.00
Total	23.5	19.59	1.1	1.24	46.3	52.95	5.1	11.49	76.0	85.27

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, **Consumer Finances & Socio-economic Survey, 1978/79.**

TABLE XI
MUSLIM REPRESENTATION IN SELECTED PROFESSIONS

	Total	Muslims	% of Total
Queen's Counsel in Sri Lanka	18	1	2.0
Senior Attorneys-at-law	11	0	1.0
Attorneys-at-law	2432	219	9.0
Medical Practitioners	5086	98	1.9
Dental and Dental Surgeons	709	16	2.2
R.M.P.	1116	18	1.6
Architect	113	1	.9
Survey	46	34	8.6
Vets	314	8	2.5
Chartered & Cost Accountants	668	34	5.08
Engineers	1081	20	1.8
	11594	419	

Source: **Ferguson's Sri Lanka Directory 1981-83.**

There are certain interesting economic implications arising from the lower labour force participation of Muslim women. For example, Muslim females do not do outdoor field farmwork unlike females of the other communities. This means that Muslim farmers have to rely more than others on hired labour. However, we can expect the Muslim female labour participation rate to rise in the future. One reason for this is the expansion of education among them. The other is the willingness of the younger generation of urban Muslim females to take employment in industry and the service sector. For example, in the two Muslim-owned garment factories surveyed by us, we found that in a female work force totalling 560 about 29% were Muslims.

Table IX shows the functional distribution of employment for the Muslim community and the consolidated figures for the population as a whole. The involvement of the Muslim community in agriculture is well below the national average. In the 1973 **Consumer Finance Survey** sample there were no Muslim workers on rubber and coconut estates (this is probably a statistical aberration) and only an insignificant 1.1% of the tea estate workers were Muslims. There are more Muslim farmers in domestic agriculture particularly in the Eastern Province and the Kandyan districts. But the bias of the community is towards the service sector.

The popular belief is that the Muslims are mainly engaged in trade. The figures in the Table support this view to the extent that compared to the general population a higher percentage of the employed Muslims are in trade, and in sales services. The figures also show that the Muslims are also relatively heavily occupied in services other than trade. Such an occupational structure inevitably leads to a high incidence of self-employment and 'employers.' Thus, it appears that on the one hand the urban base of Muslims gives them an opportunity for trading sector employment. Conversely their cultural bias towards trading and self-employment probably attracts them and keeps them in the urban areas. It is also useful to note in this context that self-employment has relatively declined among the Muslims over the period 1973–78. (Table X).

TABLE XII
MUSLIM REPRESENTATION IN RECRUITMENT TO SELECTED GOVERNMENT SERVICES TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT - 1970-81

	Total		Muslims		%	
Services	**1970-75**	**1976-81**	**1970-75**	**1976-81**	**1970-75**	**1976-81**
Sri Lanka Administrative	669	496	10	5	1.5	1.0
Typist	1164	995	12	11	1.0	1.1
General Clerical	5443	7749	98	107	1.8	1.4
Translators	195	13	8	1	4.1	7.7
Stenographers	461	491	13	30	2.8	6.1

Source: Ministry of Public Administration, 1981.

Mainly due to the educational backwardness of the community, in some (but not all) key professions such as medicine, engineering and architecture, the Muslims are under-represented compared to their population ratio. (Table XI).

In central government employment too a sample of services shown in Table XII suggests that Muslims have been similarly under represented when compared to their share of the population. In State corporation employment also the share of the Muslims in 1980 was only 3.5%. However, this should not be taken as a sufficient reason for demanding a higher quota for the Muslims. It may be that many a Muslim who otherwise would qualify for government employment prefers to work elsewhere, especially in business which generally offers a higher income. Moreover, recruitment based purely on ethnic criteria can lead to a poor quality service if a sufficient number of qualified candidates do not present themselves. Furthermore, even if this obstacle can be overcome there are compelling reasons to avoid the introduction of the ethnic quota principle to plural societies. One of the most important reasons being the encouragement it gives to further fragmentation of society along ethnic and even parochial lines. The more socially beneficial solution would be to encourage Muslim education so that they are able to compete on a more equal footing with the rest of the community.

The available evidence suggests that Muslims generally have had a marginally lower rate of unemployment when compared to the overall population (Table XIII). It seems that the Muslims have benefitted more or less to the same extent as the other communities from the improvement in the job situation after 1977.

TABLE XIII

UNEMPLOYMENT BY COMMUNITY

	% of Population		% of Labour Force	
	1973	**1978/79**	**1973**	**1978/79**
Moors	5.4	3.73	21.3	13.81
Malays	11.2	6.73	43.5	10.83
Total All Island	8.1	5.61	24.0	14.75

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, **Consumer Finance and Socio-Economic Survey, 1978/79.**

Income

The available data on income[10] shows that on average the Muslims are somewhat more prosperous than the Non-Muslims (Table XIV). For example, the per capita income of the Muslims for six months in 1973 was Rs. 407, the Sinhalese Rs. 322 and the Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils Rs. 319 and 281 respectively.[11]

TABLE XIV

PER CAPITA INCOME DISTRIBUTION BY COMMUNITY FOR SIX MONTHS

1973

Community	Sampled Population	Total Income Rs.	%	Per Capita Rs.
Muslim	2143	869916	9.3	405
Sinhalese	20424	6591893	70.5	322
Ceylon Tamils	3310	1056742	11.3	319
Indian Tamils	2555	718144	7.7	281
Others	155	110968	1.2	—
All Island	28587	9347663	100	326

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, **Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finances 1973.**

However, this does not mean that they derive a disproportionate share of the nation's total income. In 1973, their share was estimated to be 8.5%, which was marginally above the Muslim share in the population (Table XIV). Neither is it true as popular perception sometime has it, that all Muslims are relatively better off than those of the other communities. To begin with there are the usual urban-rural differentials in incomes. In 1963 the mean income of the rural Muslim income receivers was only 45% of that of the urban Muslim. This differential was common to all communities. This urban bias in the income distribution was found to remain unchanged in 1973 with respect to all the communities bar the Muslims. In the case of the latter, in 1973, the mean income per urban income receiver had dropped to 80% of the rural income. Assuming that there were no sampling or non-sampling errors we can do no more than speculate with respect to the reasons for this sharp reversal. The most

likely cause is the relative decline in incomes of urban Muslim businessmen on account of import restrictions and the stagnant export trade and the relative increase in the incomes of rural Muslim traders who usually rely more on local produce for trade. Moreover, the gem trade was buoyant in 1973 and it is possible that many a Muslim gem trader was classified as a rural dweller.

The distribution of income in the Muslim community appears to be marginally more equitable that in the other communities (Table XV). This may also be due to the preference shown for trading which results in the petty traders boosting up the share of total income claimed by the bottom 20% of income receivers.

TABLE XV

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL INCOME RECEIVED BY EACH 20% OF THE RANKED INCOME RECEIVERS ALL COMMUNITIES AND MOORS – 1973

Ranked Income Receivers		All Communities	Moors		
			Urban	Rural	Estate
Lowest	20%	5.49	7.98	6.73	2.8
2nd	20%	10.77	9.25	9.38	3.47
3rd	20%	16.64	12.90	16.75	10.00
4th	20%	17.22	22.40	13.26	16.25
Highest	20%	50.12	47.47	53.88	67.48
Mean		549.00	596.00	743.00	381.00
Median		361.00	514.00	394.00	175.00

Source: Central Bank of Ceylon, **Consumer Finance Survey 1973.**

PART II

A PROFILE OF THE MUSLIM BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Muslims in Śri Lanka have been traditionally associated not only with business but to some extent with particular types of business as well. Wholesale and retail trading and gemming are obvious examples. Although this might have been so sometime ago it is much less so today. On the one hand, non-Muslims have penetrated certain businesses such as gemming which were largely controlled by Muslims in the past. On the other hand,

TABLE XVI

SRI LANKA COMPANY SECTORS: MUSLIM REPRESENTATION IN DIRECTORATES BY TYPE OF BUSINESS – 1982

Type of firm	(1) Muslim Majority Directors		(2) Muslim Minority Directors		(3) Total (1) + (2)		(4) All Companies	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Manufacturing	12	15.8	14	22.9	26	18.9	180	22.4
Services	61	80.2	43	70.5	104	75.9	569	70.8
Tourism & Travel	3	4.0	4	6.6	7	5.2	54	6.8
Total	76	100	61	100	137	100	803	100

Source: **Fergusion's Directory,** Mercantile List 1983.

Muslim businessmen have also diversified in order to spread risk and to exploit new business opportunities which arose in the last two or three decades. Manufacturing industry and tourism being notable examples. An analysis of the mercantile list in the **Ferguson's Directory** (Table XVI) shows that in the firms with a majority of Muslim Directors there is a slight bias towards the services (excluding travel and tourism). But in general the distribution of companies by type of business in the segment of companies with Muslims on the board of directors is no different to the position of the company sector as a whole.

It has been generally believed that in Sri Lanka there is a tendency for people to restrict business partnership to members of their own ethnic group, if not to one's close relatives. We tried to test this hypothesis in relation to the Muslim business community.

Table XVII shows that in Sri Lanka's company sector there are 106 firms with one or more Muslim directors which is only 15.5% of the total number of companies (683).[12] This is more than the Muslim share of the population but by no means large enough to suggest a Muslim 'domination' of corporate business.[13] In about half of the 106 companies with Muslim directors, the Muslims are in a majority. In only about one-fourth of the firms where a Tamil director is found are they (Tamils) in a majority. But it is equally true that Sinhalese directors are in a majority in about two-thirds of the firms with which they are associated. Thus, one might suggest that ethnocentric behaviour in business is not confined to one community. However, there seems to be a greater tendency among the Muslims to confine membership of the directorates to one's relatives. Going purely by the name it appeared that in at least 35% of the firms with one or more Muslim directors, they were related to each other. The relevant percentage for the Sinhalese and Tamils were only 14.5% and 6.2%.

Our field survey revealed that the tendency towards ethnocentric business behaviour among Muslims was even greater than what the Ferguson's Directory data suggests when unincorporated businesses are also taken into account. In our sample which had a bias towards the latter type no less than 45% of the directors were family members, another 25% relatives and another 20% other Muslims. Non-Muslims accounted for only 10%. It is most unlikely that this is a characteristic restricted to Muslim business. In any event, these findings are in accordance with **a priori** expectations. As the legal form of business acquires more sophistication – sole proprietor

TABLE XVII

THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE COMPANY DIRECTORATES IN SRI LANKA – 1980

Percentage on the Directorate	Sinhala		Tamil		Muslim		Others	
	No. of firms	%	No. of firms	%	No. of firms	%	No. of firms	%
0 – 25%	44	8.4	136	42.3	26	24.5	80	38.6
26% – 50%	116	22.3	98	30.4	26	24.5	75	36.3
51% – 75%	108	20.7	28	8.7	06	5.6	33	15.9
76% – 100%	254	48.6	60	18.6	48	45.5	19	9.2
	522	100	322	100	106	100	207	100

Source: Same as Table XVI.

→ partnership → private limited liability company → public limited liability company – the need to look beyond one's immediate circle for capital and personnel also increases.

Ethnocentricity was seen not only in ownership and control but also in recruitment of management and workers. In the firms surveyed about three-fourths of the managers, clerical grades, and skilled workers were Muslims. In the unskilled category the Muslim share was only about 25% (Table XVIII). That the better paid jobs were offered to one's own was also to be expected. It was also observed that in general the larger firms had a higher percentage of non-Muslims working for them. Two principal reasons were advanced for this situation by the businessmen who were interviewed. One was the difficulty in finding suitable Muslims for the jobs. The second, and the somewhat unexpected reason was than in the case of the large labour forces, for various reasons, the management found it easier to control non-Muslim labour rather than Muslim labour. In particular Muslim businessmen pointed out the tendency of Muslim employees to ask for "favours" from the employers which they claimed did not happen in the case of non-Muslim employees.

Conclusions

The statistical analysis in the two preceding sections reveal several salient features of the socio-economic circumstances of the Muslim community. One is that in some respects the circumstances of the Muslims are not significantly different to those of the non-Muslims. Inequality in income distribution being one example. Thus, one should not exaggerate the importance of ethnicity. However, there are important differences which distinguish the Muslims from the rest of society although in many respects the evidence also suggests that these differences are gradually narrowing. Education is the best example. Muslims are still educationally relatively backward but are steadily catching up. Nevertheless, there are other features which not only distinguish them quite readily from the other communities but also appear to be more durable or at least slow to change. The preference of the Muslims for trade is the most notable and important of these features.

Historically the Muslims appear to fit the bill of the "sojourner-middle man" theory. They must have initially come to Sri Lanka temporarily for trade but given certain economic advantages of the island, especially for agriculture and internal trade, some would have permanently settled down. It is generally believed that at the time the Portuguese arrival in Sri Lanka

TABLE XVIII

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE WORKFORCE IN MUSLIM BUSINESSMEN – SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 1983

		Sole Trader		Partnership		Limited Companies	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
SKILLED	Family members	18	32.7	26	33.3	20	12.3
	Relatives	14	25.4	22	28.2	68	42.0
	Other Muslims	23	41.9	30	38.5	74	45.7
	Total Muslims	55	100	78	100	162	100
	Non-Muslims	14	20.3	03	3.7	73	31.1
	Grand Total	69	100	81	100	90	100
UNSKILLED	Family members	01	2.8	–	–	–	–
	Relatives	08	22.2	20	16.7	74	24.7
	Other Muslims	27	75.0	10	83.3	226	75.3
	Total Muslims	36	100	120	100	30	100
	Non-Muslims	87	70.7	317	72.6	905	75.1
	Grand Total	123	100	437	100	935	100

Source: **Author's Field Survey**

in 1505 the Muslims had a virtual monopoly of the island's trade. This historical bias towards trading continues to the present day. Clearly this cannot be explained by the "disadvantage theory" because as a community they have not suffered from any policy of discrimination in employment. Thus, the theory which fits in best is the "cultural theory of entrepreneurship" and for this the evidence is quite strong.

Many of the cultural attributes which are said to be essential to develop a successful middleman or 'small' business ethic are generally found among the Muslims. For example, when the 51 businessmen were questioned as to whether they agreed with the popular view that 'Muslims were cut out for business' 33 (65%) agreed and gave their ethnic tradition and family background as the reasons for it. But 18 (35%) felt that individual ability and not ethnicity was the important factor. Our statistical survey also revealed the strong preference of Muslim businessmen for people from one's own community as business partners or employees. This, not only obscures the employer-employee distinction but also discourages unionization and generally helps to minimize cost. Indeed, ethnic-oriented businesses are believed to be able to survive in the capitalist system despite competition from 'big' business mainly because of this. Ethnocentricity also relies on personal trust, loyalties and mutual obligations and group solidarity. Thus, no less than 70% of the businessmen surveyed in our sample claimed that they have helped fellow-Muslims to set themselves up in business by lending or granting money or by paying business commissions. When asked whether they felt threatened by competition from other Muslim businessmen only 14 (29%) said that they so felt. The others did not feel threatened and many felt that there was more room for new Muslim entrants to business.

However, the reasons given by the 29% who felt threatened by rival Muslim businessmen are most revealing in terms of the socio-economic transition taking place in the community. Eight of them said that they feared the younger Muslim businessmen because the latter were better educated.[14] Three said that they were worried about the younger rivals because many of the latter were backed by substantial amounts of capital accumulated in the middle-east. Even more interesting was the fact that no less than 32 (63%) claimed that they felt threatened by non-Muslim business rivals. Six of the respondents claimed that there was an attempt to "organize" non-Muslims as business rivals in fields which have been the traditional preserve of the Muslim.

These new challenges have made the Muslim business community cautiously optimistic about the future. When questioned about future prospects

14% said it would be bright, 22% bleak and 64% moderate. Those in the first and last group felt that the overall business climate was promising. But the one-fifth which were pessimistic about the future gave communal disharmony as the main reason.

The changing 'external' environment, however, has made the Muslim businessmen respond to these changes. The emphasis placed on having their children educated before taking to business is one example. Another example is the trend towards diversification of business found in 32 (63%) of the businesses surveyed. Almost all in this group said that they were exploiting new business opportunities. This evidence supports the view that given the cultural attributes conducive to business, business-oriented ethnic minorities have the capacity to adapt to changing conditions and survive in a competitive business environment.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. S. Pathmanathan, **The Kingdom of Jaffna,** Ceylon Newspapers Ltd., 1978.

2. Ivan Light, "Disadvantage Minorities in Self-employment," **International Journal of Comparative Sociology,** March-June 1979, pp. 31-45.

3. See for example Edna Bonacich, "Middleman Minorities and advanced capitalism," **Ethnic Groups,** Vol. 2, No. 3, 1980, pp. 211-219.

4. There is a considerable literature based on this line of reasoning, especially in relation to American Asians. See for example, William Peterson, **Japanese Americans,** Random House, New York, 1972.

5. Sea Light, **op cit.**

6. Central Bank of Ceylon, **Survey of Ceylon's Consumer Finances 1963,** Colombo, 1964.

7. Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), **Labour Force and Socio-economic Survey 1980/81,** Preliminary Report, 1982 and Household Income and Expenditure Report 1983, Colombo.

8. Central Bank of Ceylon, **Consumer Finances and Socio-economic Survey 1978-79,** Colombo, 1983.

9. DCS, **op cit.**

10. The latest available figures relate to 1973. Since then major changes have occurred in the economy and the inferences based on the 1973 date are not necessarily applicable to today's conditions.

11. Central Bank of Ceylon. **op cit.**

12. **Ferguson's Directory 1983.**

13. Of course, it is recognized that the size of the firm also matters in this respect. However, there is no evidence to believe that the firms controlled by Muslims are above average in size.

14. In our sample the education breakdown was as follows:
up to grade 7 – 21 (41%); JSC – 17 (33%); G.C.E. (OL) – 3 (6%); G.C.E. (AL) – 3 (6%); Degree – 7 (14%).

X

PRINCES AND SOLDIERS : THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE SRI LANKAN MALAYS

B. A. Hussainmiya

Like so many other aspects of Muslim life in Sri Lanka, serious research on the island's small Malay population have hardly been pursued among scholarly circles. When a number of microscopic minority groups such as Caffres, Afghans, Malayalees, Chetties and others introduced to the island as a result of foreign colonial activities are known to have been merged into the larger population, the Malays, despite many odds, have managed to maintain their separate ethnic identity throughout more than three hundred years of their history in Sri Lanka.[1]

Almost all of them are Muslims by religion, and form about 5% of the total Islamic population in the island.[2] Through this common bond, they have always closely interacted with the rest of the Muslim population especially the Tamil speaking Moors, the largest group among them who invariably lived as their close neighbours from the very early days of Malay settlement in the island. As a result of this relationship, it must be pointed out that the Malays being a minority within a minority, happened to lose most of their original customs and traditions, and today they follow a great deal of 'Moorish' practices in their cultural and social life. On the other hand, living among the Muslim-Moors have helped this small community in no small way to retain its religious identity.

Since this being a pioneering research on the Malays of Sri Lanka, it becomes necessary at the outset to offer some explanations as to certain vital questions concerning their current status, particularly in regard to their special identity. The first question thus may arise at this stage is, who are these Malays? As a matter of fact, this term is a misnomer when applied to a people whose ancestors have in the main originated from the

island of Java in Indonesia. Thus they are popularly known as Jā Minissu (in Sinhala), and Java Manusan (in Tamil), meaning people from Java. However, the Colonial administrators, particularly, the British persisted in attaching this label 'Malay' to this group of people which gained general currency thereafter. The local Malays themselves have conveniently accepted this identification, while conscious of their Indonesian origins. In reality, this term Malays is reflective of their linguistic background arising from the fact that they used among their people a lingua franca – 'Malay' – spoken throughout the Malay peninsula and Indonesian archipelago. I shall deal with this phenomenon in detail later on, but for the moment it suffices to point out that the word 'Malay' in the Sri Lankan context came to mean any Muslim settler from the Eastern region, i.e. the Indonesian-Malay Peninsula area.[3]

Notwithstanding the popular recognition granted to them as a separate ethnic minority, it is not always easy to apply simple 'racial' or 'cultural' criteria to distinguish a 'Malay' from any other Sri Lankan. Though one may sometimes come across a person with 'typical Malay features', in general, the Malays have scarcely retained any characteristic physical features. This fact was noticed as a fact even during the last century. Percival,a British military officer who was very familiar with the Malays[4] remarked in 1803 that "they intermarry with the Moors and other castes (sic) particularly in Ceylon and by this means acquire a much darker colour than is natural to a Malay."[5] Culturally the acknowledged 'Malay' customs and traditions are hardly followed in their midst. For instance, eating habits, dressing patterns, and other life styles etc. have changed a great deal from their 'Malay' character. The question of Malay identity then is largely to be settled on the basis of what one may call a social identification. It means that a Malay in Sri Lanka is one who considers himself/herself a Malay, functions as a member and identifies oneself with the Malay society.

There is, however, a reliable cultural sign of this self-identification as Malays, and of alignment with a Malay social system. It is to be sought in the kind of 'Malay' language still spoken widely in Malay homes. This spoken language presently differs radically from the Malay spoken in the Malay countries in the East. Yet the local members of the community call it 'Bāhāsa Melāyu' (The Malay Language) which is but a creolised language, having Malay as a source language but heavily influenced in its syntactic and semantic structure by the Tamil and Sinhalese languages spoken in the island. It is primarily on the strength of this spoken tongue

that the Sri Lankan Malays treat themselves as an exclusive community and take pride in their 'Malay' heritage. Elsewhere, as a matter of comparison it can be shown that the Malays in South Africa, a similar group of people having identical origins as the Sri Lankan Malays have lost their 'Malay identity' altogether. This happened when they ceased to speak a language of their own and instead switched on to 'Africaans' language like the other Muslim immigrants in the region.[6]

It is proposed in this paper to concentrate on and explicate the early origins of the community. Among other things this paper intends to show how and when a true 'Malay identity' grew among an heterogeneous group of Easterners who, though originated from the same geographical region, belonged to divergent social background and practices. Though the overall pattern of this early Malay settlement are known hitherto hardly any one has discussed the pioneer Malay immigrant groups and their composition. Above all, this paper seeks to clear some misconceptions concerning the Malay connections of the present day generations with their ancestors who reached the island before the advent of the Europeans.

Although any enquiry into the origins of the present day Malays has to begin with the establishment of the Dutch rule in the island as the documentary evidence available only from that period. It does not mean that the Malay people had not been in contact with Sri Lanka before the advent of the Europeans. In fact, the island's relations with the Malays of the Eastern archipelago date from ancient times. Some scholars believe that they had been to Sri Lanka as early as the beginning of the Christian era.

The strategic importance of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean commanding the entrances to the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal, had made it a focus of East-West trade in ancient and medieval times. It is likely that the Indonesian seafaring traders, as well as the migrants who became the dominant race in Madagascar, used Sri Lanka as a point of call. There is however, no direct evidence of permanent settlement as a result of these migrations.

Certain place names in Sri Lanka (which are certainly pre-European) may suggest strong Malay contacts in the early period. For example an important coastal town in the Southern province which was also an ancient port, bears the name Hambantota, which derives its meaning from **Sampan,** a Malay word of a Chinese derivation for boat. (In Sinhala, the phones of 'Ha' and 'Sa' are sometimes used alternatively). The Malay seafarers are famous for having used **Sampans** with which they might

have frequented this port which lay on the route from their homeland to the West. Other place names – for example - Ja Ela (Java Canal) and Ja Kotuwa (Java Fort) in Sinhala, and Chavakachcheri (Java Quarters) in Tamil indicate some sort of local reference to Java. It is doubtful though that the local settlements in these localities go far back into history.

The arrival of the Malays in Sri Lanka on which most of the literary sources agree took place in the middle of the thirteenth century with the invasion of Chandrabhānu, the Buddhist King of Nakhon Si Dammarat in the Isthmus of Kra of Malay Peninsular.[7] He landed during the eleventh year of Parakramabahu II (A.D. 1236–1270). About this incident Culavamsa states:

> "When the eleventh year of the reign of this king Parakramabahu II had arrived, a king of the **Jāvakas** known by the name of Chandrabhānu landed with terrible **Jāvaka** army under the treacherous pretext that they also were followers of the Buddha. All these wicked **Jāvaka** soldiers who invaded every landing-place and who with their poisoned arrows, like to terrible snakes, without ceasing harassed the people whomever they caught sight of, laid waste, raging in fury, all Lanka"[8]

It is now well established that the term **Jāvaka** as used in this chronicle actually refers to the Malays of the Peninsular[9] Chandrabhānu's first invasion did not succeed and he tried a second time to attack the Sinhalese kingdom with the help of the soldiers brought over from South India.[10] The result of this second invasion also ended in disaster as the Malay king lost his life in the battle.

In between these two invasions the Malay king appears to have gained foothold in the Northern part of Sri Lanka and became the ruler of the Jaffna kingdom. The Jāvaka King of Sri Lanka who is mentioned in the inscriptions of the South Indian Pandyan King, Jatāvarman Vīra Pandyan (A.D. 1235-1275) has been identified as Chandrabhānu.[11] In the Kudumiyāmalai Prasati, dated in Vīra Pandya's eleventh reginal year, reference can also be found to the son of the Malay King (Cavakan Maindan) who had been disobedient for some time, made his submission to Vīra Pandya, who received rewards. and was restored to the Kingdom of Sri Lanka once ruled by his father.[12]

It is now generally agreed that the rule and role of the Malays in Sri Lanka's mediaeval history is confined only to this brief episode of

Chandrabhānu's invasion. But this was not the case with the late Prof. Paranavitana. His researches on the relations between Sri Lanka and Malaysia showed far deeper involvement of the Malays in the political history of the island than what was known earlier. Thus in his **Ceylon and Malaysia** he states:

> "According to Ceylon History as at present accepted the invasion of the island by Chandrabhānu of Thambralinga were not related to any event which took place before or after them, and it was only in this period that the Malay people influenced the course of the political history of Ceylon. But, if a certain detail with regard Chandrabhānu's attack on Ceylon, given in the Rājavelī is properly understood . . . . . it would appear that Chandrabhānu's attempt to secure the sovereignty of Ceylon for himself was the result of a long historical process and that the people from Malaysia had played a very important part in the history of this island."[13]

The crux of this theory is that not only Chandrabhānu, but also the Kalinga dynasty which ruled Sri Lanka from the Capital of Polonnaruwa for about fifty years from 1184-1235 had originated from Malaysia.[14] To prove his point he marshalled all evidence possible from the chronicles and literary sources and also much more elusive information from the so-called inter-linear writings in the inscriptions.[15] This is no occasion to discuss his conclusions on the Malay involvement in Sri Lanka's past. However, it must be said that he earned a lot of scholarly criticism for his Malaysian theories. Having made a detailed study of these criticisms, the author also believes that there is no sound basis for Professor Paranavitana's ideas.[16]

Having discussed briefly the few possibilities of the early Malay contacts with the island, it now remains to be seen if any connection exists between the Malays (who came during and after the Dutch rule) and those who came here during the earlier centuries. The answer turns out to be negative after several considerations.[17]

First of all, it is not easy to determine in what numbers the Malay people had settled in Sri Lanka before the advent of the Europeans. For example, the number settled here might not have been sufficient to allow them to remain as a distinct racial element, and would therefore have been soon absorbed into the local population of Sinhalese and Tamils. The local literary sources and chronicles or other evidence belonging to the early period do not refer to a community of Malays as part of the population

of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, there had been much argument among scholars, again spurred by Paranavitana's researches as to whether the term **Malalas**, to be found in some Sinhala literary sources, actually refers to the Malay people.[18]

Secondly, the majority of the Malays who came and settled in Ceylon after the arrival of the Dutch were Muslims. As a result, especially with regard to the present day Malays, their identity is primarily determined by their adherence to the religion of Islam. It is certain that the Malay settlers who came in the early period did not know Islam, as Islam is known to have begun spreading only since the fourteenth century in the Malay - Indonesian archipelago. Thus, the earlier settlers might have been absorbed easily within the other ethnic/religious groups in the island. Therefore, as Muslims, members of the contemporary Malay community will trace their origin only from those Malays who arrived since the Dutch rule began in Ceylon.

It must also be mentioned here that in the few local Malay writings extant now, no reference has been made to any Malay ancestors of the earlier period.[19] The local Malay writers of the last century always maintained that the first Malay arrived during the period of the Dutch rule.

There also has been a suggestion that it was not the Dutch who introduced Malays for the first time to the island but that the Portuguese had already done so when they ruled the coastal parts of the island from 1505 to 1656. One H. M. Said, who wrote a brief article on the Ceylon Malays in **JMBRAS** in 1926, made this suggestion.[20]

The problem that bothered Said was "why should they be called 'Malays' when they are in reality Javanese?" and he goes on to say that:

> "Meeting Ceylon Malays there one cannot help noticing that some of them have the features of Javanese while others look like Malays and their personal names incline to both Javanese and Malay. These give an impression that there were some pure Malays residing in Ceylon either before or later than Javanese referred to. It is likely to be prior to the banishment of the Javanese. Otherwise they would not be called 'Malay'."[21]

He then argues that those Malays were brought to the island by the Portuguese. The attempt to extend the origins of the Malays in Sri Lanka from the Portuguese period on the basis of this question of nomenclature is

unacceptable, and an explanation has been given elsewhere as to why they came to be called Malays. To strengthen his thesis further, Said quotes from a few passages of John Crawford's "History of Indian Archipelago" which is also the basis of Sirisena's belief when he concludes that the Malays were brought by the Portuguese from Malacca.[22]

Crawford says that when the former Sultan of Malacca attempted to attack Portuguese controlled Malacca in the year 1523, Alfonso de Soysa arrived in time to relieve the city and after destroying many vessels and killing six thousand persons at that place (Malacca),

> "takes prisoners in such numbers as afford to every Portuguese six slaves."[23]

Said takes the word 'six slaves' and finds its connection with a place called 'Slave Island' in Colombo where Malays have resided for many generations.

He says that Alfonso de Soysa might have brought these so-called slaves to Sri Lanka and placed them at a spot which was afterwards called 'Slave Island'.

The weakness of this argument is quite obvious. First of all, Crawford was writing at a much later date, and he did not mention what happened to these slaves in the end. Secondly, there is no other evidence to show that these slaves were brought to Ceylon and kept in the place came to be known as 'Slave Island'. As it is known,[24] 'Slave Island' was created during the Dutch period, and its name derived from the fact that the Dutch confined the Company's slaves in this area. Apparently it was Said's ignorance about the origins of the Malay settlement in this area which led him to find a connection between the Malays of Slave Island, and the slaves mentioned in Crawford's book. Thus it is difficult to accept on such a filmsy ground that the Malays were brought to Sri Lanka by the Portuguese long before the Dutch did.

In the light of the above discussion, therefore, it is safe to conclude that the nucleus of the present day Malay community (and about the Malays whom this study is concerned) has to be found only among the Malay settlers who came during and after the establishment of the Dutch rule in Sri Lanka in the middle of the seventeenth century.

The Malays who were brought to Sri Lanka by the Dutch authorities subsequent to their expulsion of the Portuguese power in 1656, can be divided in to two broad categories. The first group considered of Indonesian

political exiles (usually referred to as 'Staatsbannelingen' in the Dutch documents) as well as other sections of deportees banished here by the Batavian government. The other group consisted of all other classes of 'Malays' who came here to serve the Dutch in various fields, especially in the military establishment.

It had been a Dutch practice to banish from the Netherlands East Indies rebellious rulers and princes as well as other recalcitrant chiefs and dignitaries if they posed a threat to their authority in the East. Outside the archipelago Sri Lanka and The Cape of Good Hope were the principal centres of banishment. Sri Lanka, however, seems to have been preferred by the Dutch authorities due to its proximity to the Indonesian archipelago, which meant of course that the cost of transporting the exiles could be kept down, and also that they could be speedily returned to their homeland should the Batavian government so desire. Being appreciably further away The Cape of Good Hope seemed a more satisfactory haven for the more dangerous of those deportees. Indeed, when some of the Indonesian political exiles sent to Sri Lanka caused security problems, they were despatched to the Cape.[25].

Some of the earliest political exiles came from the Moluccas and other lesser Sunda islands where Dutch influence in the East had first taken root.[26] As a result of their involvement in the wars of succession which began in the late 17th century, several Javanese princes were exiled to Ceylon. The first batch included Pangeran Adipati Amangkurat III, known in the Javanese history as 'Sunan Mas' who along with his family and retinue was banished in 1708.[27] In 1722/23 another group of Javanese princes who had risen in rebellion against the reigning Susuhnan in Mataram were captured and sent into exile, among them the sons of rebel Surapti.[28] In 1728 Arya Mangkunegara, a brother of the king Pakubuwana was banished to the island to be joined in 1723 by Danuraja, a chief Minister. A decade later his successor Natakusuma followed him.

Besides these Javanese nobles, many other Eastern kings, princes and aristocrats spent their time as exiles in Ceylon. Some idea of the wide-ranging provenance of these princely exiles can be obtained from a Dutch document dated 1788.[29] (The spelling of names is that of the original).

1. Selliya, widow of the Temengong Sawangalie Sosoronogora
2. Raja Bagoes Abdoella, Prince of Bantam
3. Raja Oesman, King of Gowa
4. Pangerang Menan Ratoe Maharaja Moeda, the Crown Prince of Tidor

5. Dinajoe Slaje, Widow of Pangerang Boeminata (of Java)
6. Temengong Sosora Widjojo (of Java)
7. Raden Ariappen Pan oelar, Prince of Madura
8. Raden Pantje Soerinata (a brother-in-law of the above)
9. Temengong Soetanagara, son of the 1st Regent of Palembang
10. Raden Pantje Wiera Diningrad (Java)
11. Pater alam (Sultan of Tidor)
12. Prince Major Ratjan Sadoe Alam, Prince of Bacan
13. Poegoe Kitjil Naimoedin, 2nd Prince of Bacan
14. Carol Boni, King of Kupang
15. Pangerang Soerija die Koesoema (of Java)
16. Panglima Raja Johansa, king of Padang
17. Pangerang Adipati Mangkoerat (of Java)
18. Widow of the Regent Ranka Marta Widjojo (of Java)

Most of the above had members of their families living with them in the island. They had either accompanied the main exiles or had joined them later. A number of the younger members of their families had been born in the island. It appears that there must have been at least 200 members of this Eastern nobility resident here in the later part of the 18th century, a significant number, taking into account that the whole 'Malay' population in Sri Lanka at the time did not amount to much more than 2,000.[30]

Not much is known about the life led by the exiles. Most of them lived in the four main coastal towns under the jurisdiction of the Dutch namely Colombo, Galle, Trincomalee and Jaffna. In Colombo, the part of Hulftsdorf where they used to live is still known among the Malays as Kampung Pangeran, where the Dutch Dissava of Colombo had his residence.[31] In the other towns for obvious security reasons their residences were normally inside the Dutch Forts. The more important exiles had armed sentries guarding their homes,[32] e.g. Sunan Mas, whose bodyguard of an ensign, a sergeant, and 24 soldiers were provided by the Dutch government for his residence in Galle.[33]

There were also other security measures taken by the Dutch concerning these political prisoners. The Dutch political Council in Ceylon stipulated (in accordance with a decision taken on 15th Nov. 1747) that all Javanese princes, when going out of their residences, must be followed by soldiers.[34] This decision seems to have been taken as a sequel to

the escape of one Surapati (probably a son of the renowned Balinese rebel of this name who came to the island in 1722/23) from Trincomalee into the enemy king's territory in the Kandyan hills.[35] Furthermore, the exiles were debarred from corresponding freely with their colleagues. In 1727 the Dutch authorities discovered an illicit correspondence between Sunan Mas's sons then resident in Jaffna and the newly arrived exile, Sura di Laga from Java who was kept in confinement in Trincomalee.[36]

Such restriction by the Dutch government in Sri Lanka could not have been intended to place a total restraint on the exiles from associating or getting closer to each other. A policy of that kind would have required extra vigilance, especially in the case of those who were allotted to live in a particular locality. The overall impression one gets, especially towards the end of this period is that the exiles were interacting closely with each other. Marriages had been contracted among them while in the island. For example, Batara Gowa Amas Madina II, the former king of Gowa (in Macassar) who was exiled here in 1767, married one Habiba, a 'Malay' lady of Noble birth, and their daughter Sitti Hawang was given in marriage to a Javanese prince Pangeran Adipati Mangkurat.[37] It is almost certain that social events within the exiled community such as births and deaths requiring group participation must have brought its members into close contact with one another on various occasions. Furthermore, some exiles were in the paid employment of the company, having been given command of Eastern soldiers serving in the island[38] and thereby enjoyed more freedom to move about within the community. It must also be mentioned here that the status of a political prisoner seems to have been imposed only on the main exile of each family. Thus, for example when Pangeran Purbaya was permitted to be accompanied by his bride, the Dutch authorities made a point of instructing that she was not to be treated as a political prisoner.[39] This means that, unlike the important political prisoners, the other members of their families must have been at liberty to associate with each other.

In any case the Dutch had little to fear from the exiles; their experience showed that the once-feared national rebels from Indonesia when sent into exile became subdued and weak. In fact, the Batavian government received from time to time pathetic letters from some of the exiles, in which they even expressed their willingness 'to wet the feet of the Dutch Governor General with tears,' imploring him to use his right of pardon and to allow them to return to their homeland.[40] Batara Gowa Amas Madina II sent as many letters as possible to his brother Madiuddin, his successor to the throne of Gowa, to mediate for his release with the Dutch authorities in Batavia. Sultan Madiuddin's many attempts to seek the release of

his brother never materialised, and he ultimately relinquished his throne in despair.[41] The unfortunate King of Gowa was left to die in Ceylon in 1795 after thirty years of life in exile.[42]

The life in banishment became excessively burdensome due to the poor living conditions to which these aristocratic political prisoners were subjected to while in the island. For their subsistence, the Dutch Government had provided monthly allowances of cash in rix dollars and some provisions which included rice, pepper and dried fish. The amount allotted to each exile was determined according to his rank, importance and the size of the family.[43] Some were granted lands to maintain themselves.

The numerous and incessant complaints received by the Dutch authorities from the exiles regarding the meagreness of their allowances demonstrate that they were undergoing immense difficulties in coping with their basic daily needs and appear to have often been in distress. Most exiles had to support large families living with them in the island as well as to pay for a number of servants from the paltry income received from the government. Unable to support themselves with this income, some are known to have had recourse at times to other desperate means to raise funds for their survival. Thus in 1724 it was reported that several ladies of the exiled Javanese Noble families had sold their personal belongings and jewellery to some local people in order to maintain their families.[44] When the exiled king of Gowa died in the island in 1795, his wife Habiba had to borrow extensively to meet his funeral expenses.[45] The destitute nature of these exiles could be seen further from the fact that when the British government took over the Dutch possessions in Sri Lanka, the payments to them came to be administered under the Department of Orphans and charitable funds.[46]

Despite all the hardships they had to face the political exiles in Sri Lanka were better off at least in one respect. Unlike their counterparts who ended up in the Cape of Good Hope, the former did not have to live in total isolation in the island. They had the good fortune of being able to fraternise with the community of 'Moors',[47] which had been in existence in Sri Lanka for well over eight hundred years in the past. Although the details of the nature of mutual contacts between these people cannot be documented it is almost certain that the presence of such a strong Muslim community in the island made the life of the Indonesian Muslim political prisoners easier, especially in their religious and cultural pursuits.

According to Ricklefs,[48] who collected a large amount of information on these political prisoners, there is evidence to identify the existence in

Sri Lanka of a sophisticated Javanese colony of aristocratic exiles at this period.[49] It is he who points out that the exiles when returned to Java had enhanced prestige, particularly in Islamic religious affairs. Thus Radin Adipati Natakusuma who was banished to Ceylon in 1743, when returned later to Java in 1758, was made chief of the religious officials in the court of Jogyakarta.[50] Likewise, one Wirakusuma who was born in Sri Lanka to a Javanese exile became the leader of a religious group in 1781 and was also appointed as an advisor to the Prince of Jogyakarta.[51] It is difficult not to assume that such religious leadership by the exiles in their own country was at least partly due to their competent training in Islamic theology during their time in Sri Lanka. Indeed, there is evidence that at one time the Indonesian exiles had become spiritual pupils to two Islamic teachers in the 18th century Sri Lanka whose names are given in **Babad Giyanti** as Sayyid Musa Ngidrus, and Ibrahim Asmara.[52] The above Javanese chronicle also gives an account of the wife of Pangeran Natakusuma describing her husband's religious experiences in Ceylon. She told King Pakubuwana III that the exiles became students of the above named teachers 'whose magical powers achieved wonderous things,'[53] where, for example, at the great recitations of the Quran each Friday, Javanese fruits and delicacies were 'magically transported to Sri Lanka. She also related how the merchants and ship-captains from such places as Surat, the Bengal coast, and Selangor, had visited these teachers. Despite the legendary nature of these tales, it is clear that such religious meetings did take place in the local Muslim community. It appears that these meetings were often held secretly for fear of prosecution by the Dutch government in Ceylon which had gone out of its way to ban such public Islamic religious ceremonies in the Maritime territories, forbidding 'Yogis' and 'heathen mendicants' from leading such gatherings.[54]

Because of such close contacts between these two groups of Muslims in the island Ricklefs is perhaps right in questioning whether the Dutch, who were constantly worried about the anti-European potential of Islam, were wise to have selected Sri Lanka as a place of exile for these Indonesian political prisoners.[55] Indeed, the local Dutch authorities seem to have been concerned about this fact when the Moors were suspected of assisting some top Javanese prisoners to carry out secret correspondence among themselves.[56] Moreover, the island was situated directly on the main pilgrimage route from Indonesia to Mecca, as well as on the well-established trade route favoured by the Muslim traders who came to Sri Lanka for business. Whatever the case may be, the Dutch, due to the peaceful nature of the local Muslim population, need not have worried much about any possible military threat or sabotage to their authority

arising from the combination of these two sections of Muslims living in the island.

Apart from the princely exiles, a host of others from all ranks of life including lesser 'Malay' chiefs, petty officials and commoners, had been deported by the Batavian government to Sri Lanka.[57] Most of them had been convicted on criminal charges and their treatment and status in the island seem to have been determined by the severity of crimes committed by them at home. Those convicted of violent crimes were usually kept in chains and had to do hard labour during the period of their punishment.[58] A section of the deportees, not kept in chains, but committed to prison cells, performed hard-labour in the service of the Company. Others were allowed to remain free and earn their living either by performing services to the company or engaging themselves in some form of handicraft.[59] Sometimes, these 'criminal' deportees were recruited to serve in the native army.[60]

It is difficult to assess the number of such 'criminals', but throughout the period of the Dutch rule in Sri Lanka there was a steady inflow of this class of deportees from the Eastern islands. In 1731 alone there were 131 of these convicts serving the Company in Sri Lanka,[61] not to mention the others who served in the military and those who were set free and remained in the island.

It is almost certain that the deported 'convicts' formed part of the early Malay population in the island. In 1782, for example, the Dutch government decreed that those deportees who had been taken into the service of the Company must remain in Ceylon.[62] Further, in the same year it was decided that, except the branded criminals, other deportees could be enlisted into the native army.[63] Thus, a good part of these convicts had the chance to mix up with their fellow Easterners in the island. Those who were set free had the opportunity to raise families here and settle down permanently. In this sense, the 'Malay' community of Sri Lanka can be said to owe its origins partly to these 'Malay' convict settlers, a fact which has not been mentioned in the general statements on the origins of the island Malays, whose ancestry has always been attributed to either the 'Malay Princes' or the 'soldiers'.[64]

The largest numerical group in the early Malay population was however, the soldiers who made up the bulk of the Dutch garrison on the island throughout the period. The Batavian government despatched yearly contingents of troops apart from the reinforcements sent in times of emergencies and wars.[65]

From as early as the middle of the 17th century when the Dutch began attacks upon the Portuguese fortifications on the island the 'Malay' troops are said to have been present in the Dutch army. These troops took part at the storming of Galle by Admiral Coster in 1640 and during the siege of Colombo in 1655/56 the Malays were given the pride of place at the storming of the Fort.[66] In 1657, a force of Malays under their own Captain Raja Talella accompanied Rycklof van Goens in the Dutch expedition against the Portuguese stations on the Malabar Coast and subsequently took part in the capture of Mannar and Jaffna in 1658.[67] Malay soldiers are frequently mentioned in the Dutch wars against Kandy.[68]

Many Eastern national groups were represented among these 'Malay' soldiers. We find references to Amboinese, Bandanese,[69] Balinese, Bugis, Javanese, Madurese, Sumanepers and Malays. During the early attacks upon the Portuguese, Amboinese and Javanese soldiers had been used by the Dutch authorities. According to Christopher Schwitser, a Swiss traveller who visited the island in the 1680, Amboinese soldiers were kept in the Dutch garrison at the fort of Sitawaka.[70] In 1737 three companies of Balinese troops were despatched from Batavia to Ceylon on the request of the Governor van Imhoff to prepare for war against the Kandyans.[71] Malays and Buginese were sent to reinforce native troops in Ceylon in 1761,[72] and in 1788, Madurese and Sumanepers were sent to garrison Mullaitivu in the Eastern Coast.[73] Thus it can be seen that almost all the major ethnic groups from the region of the Eastern Archipelago were represented among the soldiers whom we have chosen to refer to by the general term 'Malays', an appellation which will be discussed in more detail later.

Little is known about the life and other activities of these soldiers apart from Christopher Schwitser's description of a group of Amboinese soldiers who were stationed at the Dutch camp of Sitawaka[74] in 1680. His description deserves to be quoted in full, as it throws light on several important aspects of the early 'Malay' soldiery in the island.

> "1680, 9th February.
>
> .....We went to relieve the company that was at Sittawack .....It is situated upon a rocky ground; near to this over the river, stood heretofore the King of Sittawack's palace, ruined since by the Portuguese. The Fort is about four hundred paces in circuit..... Here is also continually kept a company of Amboinese in the Dutch service. Their lieutenant was called

Alons, and was of Royal blood. By day they lie out of fort. in a whole street together, their wives with them: But at nights they are as obliged to be in the fort as many of us. They are very nimble and active at leaping and fencing. They never have but little beards, and behind in their necks they have a growth like a wen.
Their pay is, for a lietenant 24 rix dollars a month, an ensign 16, a Cornet 8, and a Private soldier 5 all paid in money. The Cingulayans are mightily afraid of the Amboinese, far more than of the Europeans; For they are in part of the true cannibal sort. They wear musquets and short swords. Besides their own language, they generally speak Malaysh, Cingulaish, Portuguese and Dutch. They love dice and card playing excessively, and Sundays they spend in cock-fighting, so that many become poor by gaming. When they have lost all their money they make from thin rotting all sorts of lovely baskets, and such. When their monthly pay comes into their hands again, each pays first his debts, and what is left they put to the venture by dice and cards, and so continue till one of them has all the money to himself. Also it is much if the wife be not stripped of her ornaments of gold, silver and silks. The wives, which in part are Amboinese, in part Singulayans, and Malabarians may say nothing against this, but when the man games away their little property, they must nourish him and his children as well as they can through the month and await his better fortune at gaming.'[75]

Reading the above description of the Amboinese soldiers, one can see that many important facts are clustered together in it. In fact, it may also be taken as a general reference applicable in the case of the other Malay soldiers as well, who were serving with the Dutch army during this period.

Firstly, it is stated that the Lieutenant of the Amboinese was of Royal blood. It is difficult to trace the identity of this person who was called Alon, but the Dutch had employed some political exiles of the Malay Royal families as unit leaders of the Malay army in the island. In 1764, Pangeran Singasarie, who belonged to the family of exiled Sunan Mas, the Javanese King Mataram, was stated to have been in charge of a regular army unit for some time.[76] Temengong Sasara Negara, another Royal political exile, had been appointed as the Commander of the Company

of the Free Javanese which was formed in 1763.[77] The military leadership of the Royal exiles seems to have ensured better discipline and loyalty on the part of their Malay soldiers.

Secondly, Schwitser relates that the wives of these soldiers lived together with their husbands in the vicinity of Sitawaka garrison but outside the fort, where the latter had to return during night time like the rest of the European troops. It is not common for soldiers in the garrisons to have their wives along with them, but it is of interest to note that these wives of the Easterners used to follow their husbands even to the battle front. This had created endless problems to the Dutch authorities who rarely succeeded in refraining these women from accompanying their husbands who had to leave their stations to fight the enemy. Invariably during the Dutch Kandyan wars, and the period of inland rebellions, it was not uncommon to see the whole families of the Malay soldiers become mobile, so much so that a Dutch Commander lamented in 1764 that "the trouble is that the Javanese have such a large train of women and gear, I have told them that they must leave these behind, or pay coolies, but most of them act as coolies themselves instead of bearing arms."[78]

Thirdly, regarding the fact that the Sinhalese were afraid more of the Amboinese than the European troops. While it may not be totally correct, it can be taken as a reflection of the fighting disposition of these men and also an indication of the frequent encounters between these men and the local Sinhalese during times of rebellion and the Kandyan wars. The Eastern troops were of course well acclimatized to the tropical conditions of the island as they came from countries with similar climatic and geographical conditions.

It was quite easy for these troops to penetrate through the jungles to meet the Sinhalese armies, and even to engage in personal combat with the enemy troops with their traditional mode of warfare, using krisses and short-swords.[79] The Kandyans are known to have generally employed a guerilla-type of warfare, which was more suitable to the local terrain. Perhaps this was one of the reasons for as to why they were not subdued by either the Portuguese or the Dutch powers. The details of the tactics adopted by the Dutch in combatting the Kandyans are little known, but it is possible that the Malay troops were in the forefront of the Dutch army during their attacks upon the Sinhalese troops of Kandy, and thus with their ferocity they struck terror in the hearts of the local people.

Fourthly, there is an important point about the languages spoken by the Amboinese as given by Schwitser. This can be taken as an authentic proof

of the linguistic situation of the early period. However, this aspect is too important to be commented upon here, and is therefore to be included in a special research paper on the language of the Sri Lankan Malays.

Fifthly, it is mentioned that the Amboinese were very fond of gambling and as a result they were eternally in debt. This habit of gambling among the Eastern soldiers caused the Dutch authorities some problems. It was brought to the notice of the government that the soldiers used to borrow money from respective captains of their companies and when they were unable to settle their debts deserted their ranks and disappeared in the Sinhalese countryside.[80] As a result, the Dutch government had to prohibit the practice of money-lending to the soldiers.[81] Schwitser also refers in this regard that when soldiers had become poor by gaming they had made all sorts of lovely baskets from this rotting. Clearly, this is the earliest reference to the rattan-weaving which had remained another traditional occupation among the Sri Lankan Malays in the past.[82]

Finally, Schwitser's reference to the wives of the Amboinese soldiers is interesting, as it shows in the first place that the Eastern soldiers, when embarked for Ceylon, brought their womenfolk along with them. It is not known in what proportion such women from the East-Indies came to the island during the Dutch period. Later on the British authorities actively encouraged the foreign Malay recruits to bring along their families to settle down in Ceylon in order to build up a strong Malay colony so that a steady supply of recruits can be obtained locally. Further investigation is necessary to confirm whether the Dutch also had been following a similar policy. In any case, as the number of women arriving from the East Indies was limited, a good proportion of 'Malay' soldiers had to find their wives among the local women from the Sinhalese, Tamil or Moor communities,[83] It appears that the Malay Muslims preferred to marry the local Moor women because of their common religious background. A number of such cases of inter-marriage between the Malays and the Moors is reported in the 'Tombos.[84] compiled by the Dutch.[85]

Apart from the convict settlers, soldiers and political exiles, the early Malay population also owes its origin, albeit in a small way, to slaves sent now and then by the Batavian government. Most of them originated from the Moluccas, the lesser Sunda islands etc., and were forced to serve for their life-time in the Dutch government establishments. Some rich private individuals also owned slaves from the Eastern islands.[86] Furthermore, a number of slaves served the Indonesian political exiles in Ceylon. There were occasions when slaves owned by the Dutch government gained their

freedom by joining the native army. In 1763 a 'Malay Company was formed out of deportees and 31 slaves who earned their freedom.[87] Similarly, when van de Graaf made secret preparations to invade the Kandyan kingdom in 1781, many slaves were set free on condition that they would join the expedition.[88] It is almost certain that as free men they raised families like the other Easterners, settled in the island, and merged into the early Malay community.

As time went on there grew up a sizeable population of Free Malays, or as the Dutch preferred to call it, the Free Javanese, particularly after the middle of the 18th century. These 'Free Javanese' were in part former soldiers who, upon their discharge had settled in the island and others who engaged themselves in non-government occupations. The later category included also many descendants of the political exiles. Although evidence relating to the non-military occupations of the early Malays is hard to come by there were certain fields, i.e., such as gardening, rattan weaving, etc. in which Malays are known to have specialised in as indicated in the early British reports.[89] According to Bertolacci, some Malays were engaged in petty trade by collecting and selling arecanuts in the inland areas.[90] Perhaps the donor of land in Wekande (in Colombo) to build a mosque in the year 1783, who was called Pandan Balie, a free 'Javanese' must have been one of these small traders who was able to earn enough to make a gift of land to his community.[91] At the lower level, a number of Malays were employed as domestic servants.

The civil status of the 'Free Javanese' under the Dutch rule in the island was the same as that of the Moors and Chetties who, as members of foreign communities, were compelled to perform **Uliyam** services for the government.[92] However, the political exiles and the Malay soldiers were exempted from such service,[93] the former because of their Royal dignity, the latter because of their position as servants of the Company. Since the number of the Free Javanese was small at the beginning there was no special organization that seemed to form them into a guild to extract this Uliyam service, and a Moor chieftain was appointed to look after their affairs. However in 1769, as their number increased, the Free Javanese were organized into a separate unit and this time a Royal Javanese exile, Sosoro Wijoyo was appointed as their Captain.[94]

Having discussed the various groups which formed the early Malay population in Ceylon, a population count must be taken in the island, but only towards the end of the Dutch Rule it is possible to arrive at an approximate figure concerning the number of Malays resident in the island. Perhaps one of the plausible means of calculating their population during the

period is to take into account the number of Malay soldiers who were present in the island since they formed the bulk of the community.

The total number of soldiers of course varied according to the military needs of the Dutch authorities. Thus in 1764, in anticipation of war with the Kandyan king they had to build up their military reserve by recruiting men by all possible means. The number of Eastern soldiers shot up from about 800 to 2,500 in that year, presumably this was their highest total ever to be reached in the Dutch Army serving in the island.[95] It appears that under normal conditions, the total number of Malays in the Dutch army fluctuated around 800 divided into 10 companies.[96] As mentioned earlier, new batches of recruits were sent now and then from Batavia to replace discharged soldiers. All these discharged soldiers did not stay back in the island after their period of service. Some were sent back to Batavia, but it is not clear on what basis this was done.[97] It must have been difficult for them to leave the island after having lived here for so long and especially after having built up family ties in the local community.

A more definite figure of the Malay soldiers in the Dutch service is available for the years 1795/96, when the British began attacks upon the Dutch fortifications in Sri Lanka. According to the figures quoted by Colonel Stuart, the British Commander who led the main attacks, there were probably around 1,400 Malays serving with the Dutch army. Colonel Stuart gave the numbers of the Dutch troops who surrendered to the British in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Colombo. Thus in Trincomalee, there were 373 Malays (284 in Fort Frederick, and 89 in Fort Ostenberg) who surrendered to the British and in Colombo there were two battalions of Malays consisting of 880 men.[98] In Batticaloa, Colonel Stuart was informed that there had been 133 Malays, but most of them had escaped to inland areas on the eve of the British arrival at that Fort.[99] However, it must be borne in mind that all these Malay soldiers did not belong to the regular army. Anticipating the British attacks, the Dutch had mobilised a number of civilians to their army units in the important coastal towns of Colombo, Galle and Trincomalee etc. The Malays seemed to have been their major target, and in fact, in 1785 the Dutch had decided to disband the regiment of Free Moors, and in their place recruited the local Malay civilians.[100] Thus, on the figures given by the English Colonel, it is possible to estimate approximately the total number of Malay population at the tail-end of the Dutch period.

Thus, going by the number of Malays given in Stuart's despatch, i.e. 1,400, we may on the safe assumption that at least half of them had their families with them, arrive at an approximate figure of 2,200 as the number of

Malays resident in Ceylon at the end of the 18th century. This does not, however, include another 200 or more members of the exiled Royal families.

Having analysed the composition of the early Malay population, it remains to be seen at what stage a real Sri Lankan Malay community emerged from an ethnic mosaic of this heterogeneous group of Easterners and what factors contributed in the formation of such a community within the Dutch period. By the time the British had arrived in the island in 1795, the Malays appeared to have been on a firm footing in the island, so much so that the English administrators, with very few exceptions identified and referred to them only as Malays. Some British officials had even come to regard the locally born Malays as a group much superior to the new immigrants who were recruited to the regiment from the Eastern Islands.[101]

In the first place, officially as far as the Dutch were concerned a common recognition was accorded to the early Malays on the basis of the fact that all of them came from the East, hence the term 'Oosterlingen' which is frequently used in the Dutch documents to refer to them collectively. A modern Dutch author defines this term 'as referring to those people who originally came from the coastal regions of the Eastern Sea.[102]' C. R. Boxer states that this term stands for those Indonesian from the Moluccas, and the lesser Sunda islands etc., known collectively as the Great East. [103] it appears that in the Sri Lankan context, the Dutch usage of the term 'Oosterlingen' has been applied to any person from the Malay Indonesian archipelago including the Javanese.

Next to 'Oosterlingen', another collective term used in the Dutch sources, particularly after the middle of the 18th century to refer to these Eastern communities, was 'Javaans' (Javanese). Originally, it seems to have been applied only to the ethnic Javanese who were only one of the different groups of Easterners which included Amboinese and Bandanese and others. Does this mean that the Javanese population had outnumbered the other Eastern element by this time? In one sense, this shift of emphasis from the 'Oosterlingen' to 'Javaans' can be taken as a significant pointer to the direction in which the early Malay community had developed during the Dutch period. One gets the impression that the rest of the Eastern groups had been absorbed by the ethnic Javanese community at the close of the 18th century. But who were these 'Javanese'? Why then did the British keep on referring to these people as 'Malays' when they first came across them in 1795 ?

The diverse National groups of Eastern soldiers such as the Amboinese, Bandanese, Bugis, Javanese and others, who came to do military service in the island, were in the main former residents of Batavia and did not come directly from the different geographic regions of the Archipelago as their names suggest.[104] Since the founding of the Dutch fort city of Batavia in 1619, a number of such Nationalities are known to have settled in the outskirts of Batavia.[105] De Haan shows in his **Oud Batavia** that they were separate 'Kampungs' for each of these Nationalities with their own social set-up and organizations, religious places of worship, headed by their own chieftains.[106] These settlements had taken place without much interference from the Dutch government in Batavia. However, when it came to the question of finding men for their native army, the inhabitants of Batavia proved to be an ideal recruiting ground for the Dutch. It is known that when mass recruitment of soldiers did take place during the protracted Dutch wars in central Java in 1750, on the Malabar coast in 1717, and in Sri Lanka in 1763, these outer Kampungs of Batavia became almost depopulated.[107]

Thus it seems likely that the majority of the early Malays brought here to serve in the native army had Batavia as their point of origin. If this theory is accepted, it is also to be granted that from the very beginning of their arrival in the island they had a common group identity among themselves as a result of assimilation known to have already taken place among the various ethnic nationalities from the archipelago which had settled in Batavia.

One of the main factors which assisted the residents of Batavia to gain a distant group identity was the simplified Malay language, alias 'Batavian Malay' which they adopted as their main medium of communication. Viekke rightly points out that:

> "Gradually this heterogeneous population developed into a new Indonesian National group, distinct from the Sundanese of the West and the Javanese of the East Java and with a simplified Malay language the lingua franca of the Archipelago as their Native tongue."[108]

So it is these 'Neo-Indonesians' who formed the nucleus of the original Malay population in Sri Lanka. Their group identity must have received an added boost once they came to live among alien people and in strange surroundings.

Thus in every case, the formative period for the locally rooted society can

be said to have begun when immigrants settled in Ceylon, formed alliance with indigenous women (in addition to the 'Eastern' womenfolk brought to the island) and reared children who were taught to identify themselves as 'Malays'. Marriage among these mixed-blood descendants of immigrants led eventually to the development of a fairly stable society. This process must have begun with the first few generations of 'Eastern Settlers' in Ceylon, and the culture of the resultant society was stabilized well before the end of the Dutch rule in the island. Once this stabilization of a local Malay culture and society was achieved it became possible for the other Eastern nationalities like the Madurese and Sumanapers, who joined the community later around 1782 to merge into the community of "Ceylon Malays" without much difficulty.

The difference between the terms 'Javanese' and 'Malays' as used by the Dutch and the British respectively to refer to this community can be explained now. The former indicated, in the first place, the geographical identity of the early Malays. Batavia from where many of them had orginated, was situated in the island of Java and hence they were commonly called by the generic term 'Javanese'. On the other hand, it may be the case that the actual ethnic Javanese might have been the dominant group among the original Eastern population and therefore the whole community came to be known after this leading group. This line of argument is further borne out by the fact that in 1764 the free Javanese Company was named as such precisely because of the conspicuously large number of the Javanese residents in the island. At the same time, the Dutch officials had included other minor groups of Easterners in this Company. Thus, for instance, when two soldiers by the names of Dicko (or Bicko?) and Abdullah applied for discharge from the company in 1763 they are specifically referred to as Malay soldiers.(109) But labelling this community as 'Javanese' in the way the Dutch did was not without its shortcomings. After 1780, a number of Madurese and Sumanapers also joined this community and therefore the term Javanese, if used with an ethnic connotation, would not be proper if any newcomers belonging to other races from the East were to be included in this community.

The term Malays as introduced by the British was an all embracing one, which emphasised the linguistic unity of these people rather than their ethnic or racial origins. What the British saw in the island at the tail-end of the 18th century was a fairly stabilized and distinctly identifiable group of people, whose ethnic differences had greatly disappeared and had developed a self-identity as members of a Malay-speaking community. This term obviously had its merits, because labelling this community on the basis of its language reflected the real nature of the local Malays as they

had evolved as a distinct population group through the adoption of a common Lingua Franca, i.e. the Malay. On the other hand, this term became more meaningful later, particularly when the ethnic Malays from the Malay Peninsular settled here during the 19th century and were integrated into the already well established community of Malays in Sri Lanka.

In addition to the language factor, the religion of Islam too provided a basis for group identity among the Malays of the island. In Dutch times, not all the Easterners who came to Sri Lanka were the followers of Islam. It is particularly difficult to establish the religious background of the Amboinese Balinese, and even Javanese, because among the first group there were a considerable number of Christians, while most of the Balinese belonged to Hindu or Buddhist religion. Some Javanese had embraced Christianity in 1660 and received benefits from the Dutch government.[110] Nevertheless, it is quite clear that a large majority of the early Malays were followers of Islam, and in the process of the evolution of the Sri Lankan Malay Community all the non-muslim Easterners dropped out. Thus, at last the term 'Malays' besides its linguistic connotation came to mean only the Muslim 'Malays'.

It is almost certain that in maintaining their religious identity and fervour, the Malays received encouragement and support from the well-rooted Muslim 'Moor' community. It may even be argued that, if not for this factor, the Malays of Sri Lanka would have quickly lost their sense of identity and have been absorbed into the other local communities. In fact, it was this fate which overtook the community of Cape Malays, who were in origin similar to the Ceylon Malays. Islamic practices and values had declined to such an extent among the Cape Malays that a Turkish authority in 1877 reports that they knew nothing more concerning Islam than the necessity of the practice of circumcision.[111] No similar decline is ever known to have taken place among the Sri Lankan Malays, this fact must surely be due to the reinforcing effect created by the presence of that other Muslim group of the Island of the 'Moors' of Ceylon.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES

AMS	Assistant Military Secretary
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient
BKI	Bingdragen tot de taal-Land-en Volkenkunde
CEMRO	Ceylon Malay Research Organization
C. L. R.	Ceylon Literary Review
CS	Colonial Secretary
D. P. C.	Dutch Political Council
JMBRAS	Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society
Mlly	Military
S.L.N.A.	Sri Lanka National Archives
U.C.R.	University of Ceylon Review
W. O.	War Office (London)

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FOOTNOTES

1. Official recognition is still granted to Malays as a separate racial group in government literature. See for example the latest Census and Statistics publications, which give separate population figure for Malays.

2. The total Malay population according to the latest Census figures are in the region of 43,000 or 0.29% and the Ceylon Moors are enumerated at 1,057,000 or 7.6% of the population. Statistical pocket book – 1983, p. 13/14.

3. Hussainmiya (1976) p. 12.

4. Robert Percival served in the same garrison with them for 3½ years as an officer. See Percival (1803) p. 184.

5. **Op. Cit.** p. 186.

6. Unlike in the case of the Sri Lankan Malays, enough scholarly attention have been paid to the South African Malays. See Du Plessis, Izaak David and C. A. Luckhoff; **The Malay Quarters and its People,** Cape Town (1953).
Lately Rosemary Ridd has submitted a D.Phil thesis on the subject to Oxford University in 1981.

7. For an identification of this ruler see Coedes (1918): pp. 1–36.

8. Cuḷavamsa LXXXIII; pp. 36–51.

9. Javaka, as used in the Sinhalese chronicle is to be taken as an ethnic term for Malay/Indonesian which is similar to the modern Cambodian 'Java' and applies to the Malays of the Peninsula as well as to the islands of Indonesia.

10. For details of this invasion see Sirisena (1978).

11. Sirisena; **Op. Cit.,** p. 18.

12. Nilakanta Sastri (1949); pp. 161–62.

13. Paranavitana (1966); p. 81.
Not only the Kalinga dynasty, but even the kings of the Kotte Kingdom who ruled during 14th and 15th century in Western Sri Lanka had Malay origins !

14. For a study of the Kalinga dynasty see Sirima Wickremasinghe **'The Kalinga Period of Ceylon History'** unpublished thesis (M. A. University of Ceylon (1956).

15. Paranavitana claims that extracts from a number of chronicles which should prove extremely important to students of Sri Lanka and South East Asian history are inscribed in between the lines of several inscriptions including that of the slab inscription of **Vesagiriya** and the slab inscription No. 1 of Mahinda IV at the Abayagiri monastery which has always been published. R. A. L. H. Gunawardena (1967); pp. 1–46 conclusively proves that there is no scientific base for Professor's reading of these manuscripts and above all the interlinear writing claimed by him do not exist at all.

16. See especially R. A. L. H. Gunawardena (1967) for a best criticism of the Paranavitana theory.

17. It is however important to note that some members of the Malay community at present time take pride in tracing their beginning from the Malay Kings who ruled Sri Lanka in the mediaeval times. In a way they prefer to contribute to Paranavitana's theory rather uncritically. For instance read the following text from a mimeographed phamphlet authored by a Malay, Mr. M. C. Mantara (1970), (who resides in Angulana in Sri Lanka). "The Sinhalese must consider the Malays as their Royal cousins, as many of the kings who ruled Ceylon in ancient times were of Malay or Indonesian origins."

18. For a detailed discussion of the problem posed by the term Malalas see Sirisena (1974); pp. 14–20.

19. Especially, Baba Ounus Saldin in his **Syair Faid al abad** (see Hussainmiya – 1978).

20. Said (1926); pp. 266–268.

21. **Op. Cit.** p. 267.

22. Crawford (1820).

23. **Op. Cit.**

24. Hulugalle (1965) p. 35.

25. Some cases are mentioned in **Dagh Register**, dated 5th and 6th October 1691.

26. Dagh Register, 30th August 1682 and 25th November 1682.

27. See de Graaf (1949), pp. 238–241 for these events in Javanese History.

28. Crawford (1920), Vol. II, pp. 493–4.

29. S. L. N. A., 1/200, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 8th March 1788.

30. See infra p. 25.

31. Father S. G. Perera (1939), p. 36–38.

32. S. L. N. A., 1/69, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 14th Nov. 1733.

33. "Lives of the Dutch Governor-General of Netherlands India J. Maatzuiker," **CLR**, 1(21), December, p. 166.

34. S. L. N. A., 1/102, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 15th November 1747.

35. S. L. N. A., 1/95, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 5th November 1748.

36. S. L. N. A., 1/16, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 13th June 1727.

37. Patunru (1969) p. 86. But a contemporary document states that it was one Sitti Habiba's sister who was married to Pangeran Adipati Mangkurat, and the other sister was married to Sadur Alam, Prince of Bacan, another important exile living in the island at that time.
S. L. N. A., 7/20, North's Mily. diary, 19th December 1803.

38. Pangeran Singarasi of Java was one such exile who commanded a unit of Native Malay troops serving the Dutch in 1767. Raven-Hart (Ed.) (1964) p. 44.

39. S. L. N. A., 1/37, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 7th December 1761.

40. See Dagh Register, 24th November 1682.

41. Patunru (1969), p. 85.

42. De Graaf (1949) p. 241.

43. The details of the allowances paid to the exiles can be seen from S. L. N. A., 1/200, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 8th March 1788.

44. S. L. N. A., 1/58, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 20th September 1724.

45. S. L. N. A., 7/20, North's Mily. diary, 19th December 1803.

46. de Silva, Colvin R., (1953), p. 241.

47. 'Moor' is the generic term by which it was customary at one time in Europe to describe a Muslim from whatever country he came. The epithet was borrowed by the Portuguese who bestowed it indiscriminately upon the Arabs and their descendents, whom in the 16th century they found established as traders in almost every part of the Asian and African coast.

48. See Ricklefs (1974) pp. 102–8 for information on the political activities of the exiles in the Javanese Kingdom.

49. Ricklefs, personal communication, 10th November 1976.

50. Ricklefs **op. cit.**, P. 104.

51. Ricklefs, personal communication 10th November 1976.

52. Ricklefs, **op. cit.**, p. 103.

53. **Ibid.**

54. ". . . dat geen S jogys ofte Hedense Lantlopers of Ceylon in SComp' landen geoogt worden, nogh oock dat de Mooren eenige publyque Mahomataenese Godsdienst nomen te Pleegen alsoo 't selve op hoge paens verboden is." Memoirs of Ryckloff van Goens, p. 25.

55. Ricklefs (1974), p. 103.

56. S. L. N. A., 1/61, Minutes of the Political Council in Ceylon, 13th June 1727.

57. A number of such cases are mentioned in **Realia**, Eerste Deel, (1881) pp. 236, 258, 259 and 260.

58. These include not only criminals but even men such as Said Muhammed, an Islamic preacher who originated from Arabia but domiciled in Batavia in 1780s was banished and committed to chains in the island for his suspected anti-Dutch activities in Batavia and Bantam. See de Jonge (1884), Vol. 12, p. 128.

59. Dahg Register, 30th August 1682.

60. **Realia,** Vol. 1, p. 87, (5th July 1782). In anticipation of war with the Kandyans the Dutch made plans to strengthen their military in 1763. An extra Malay company was formed in that year by including about 120 deportees. S.L.N.A., 1/4864, Minutes of the Secret War Committee, 9th September 1763.

61. **Memoirs of Van Gollenese,** p. 92.

62. Realia, Vol. I, p. 87, 19th March 1782.

63. Ibid., 5th July 1782

64. Jayah (1969), p. 74 attributes their origins to the exiled Princes, while K. M. de Silva (Ed.) (1973), p. 300 refers only to the East Indian Troops.

65. Such reinforcements of Eastern troops were received in the island in 1737, 1761 and 1782.

66. Reimers (1924), p. 3

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid

69. Peiris (1929), p. 190 states during the Dutch attack on the Fort of Colombo in 1656, "Bandanese" did good work in their pursuit with their sharp swords at one blow they struck off the heads of their adversaries (Portuguese).

70. Raven-Hart Ed. (1959), p. 69/70

71. Rusconi (1939), p. 19.

72. S. L. N. A., 1/490, Annex to minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 22nd January 1761.

73. S. L. N. A., 1/1793, Annex to minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 18th January 1788.

74. Memoirs of Rycklof van Goens, p. 13 mentions "that the post highest in elevation belonging to Colombo is the excellent stone redoubt at Sitawaka, ten hours journey from Colombo.
(an hours journey is equal to about 3½ miles).

75. Raven Hart (Ed.) Op.Cit., p. 70

76. Raven Hart (1964), p. 21

77. S. L. N. A., 1/4864, Minutes of the Secret War Committee, 9th September 1763.

78. Raven Hart (Ed), **Op.Cit.** p. 64

79. See Schrieke (1975), Vol. 2, pp. 122-127 for a discussion on the Javanese methods of warfare and the arms used.

80. One Rahman, a Malay Captain is said to have exorted 6 shillings for a debt of 3 Rix dollars or 50% per annum. S. L. N. A., 1/4865, Minutes of the Secret war committee, 11th August 1764.

81. The Dutch authorities prohibited loan of more than half a rupee to the Malay soldiers, Ibid.

82. See Christie David (1958), p. 7. Says "The original cane workers here were Malays and the trade was plied in Slave Island . . ."

83. Schwitser did not mention about the religious background of the Amboinese, and it may be that they were not followers of Islam, which explains partly why only Sinhalese and Malabari (Tamil) wives are mentioned in this case. Or it may be that the 'Moorish' women were included in the racial term of 'Malabaris.'

84. Tombo (Sinhalese Thombuwa) is a system of registration introduced to Ceylon by the Portuguese which they borrowed from the Sinhalese. The Dutch perfected this system in the 1760s by recording details of persons, and properties in their districts of administration.

85. S. L. N. A., 1/3758, Head Tomba, p. 63 and p. 71

86. Christoffel de Saram, alias Atapattu Mudaliyar owned two Eastern slaves namely Troena de Wangsa and Amber. S. L. N. A., 1/4740, Criminal files on individuals.

87. S. L. N. A., 1/4864, Minutes of the Secret War Committee, 9th September 1763. Also in 1786, Eastern slaves were freed to be formed into a Company of Militia. S. L. N. A., 1/193, The D. P. C., 26th April 1786.

88. S. L. N. A., 1/591, Annex to the Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 21st October 1781.

89. For example in 1803 Robert Percival a British military officer speaks highly of Malay gardeners, Percival (1805), p. 174.

90. Bertollaci (1817), p. 18

91. Jayah (1971), p. 8

92. Uliyam (Tamil) is originally the compulsory manual labour which the foreign communities such as Moors and Chetties performed in the kandyan kingdom. The Dutch too followed this system but the British found it obnoxious and abolished it in 1808.

93. S. L. N. A., 1/88, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 30th Sept., 1743. However the descendants of exiles had to perform Uliyam like the rest of the Malays. S. L. N. A., 1/87, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 6th July 1743.

94. S. L. N. A. 1/2556, Appointment of local Chieftains, 13th 1769.

95. The total number in the Dutch army as on 15th May 1764 consisted of 3,909 Europeans, 2,458 Easterners and 1,242 Sipanis. Raven-Hart (1964), p. 56.

96. Before the above increase took place these were 10 Companies of Malays totalling 791 men. **Op. Cit.**, p. 21

97. S. L. N. A. 1/736, Annexes to the Minutes of the "Militalre department," 15th April 1794.

98. W. O., 1/362, Stuart to Dandas, 30th August 1795, and enclosures for the garrison, Capitulation etc.

99. W. O., 1/362, Stuart to Dandas, 10th October 1795 and enclosures.

100. S. L. N. A., 1/179, Minutes of the D. P. C., Colombo, 24th June 1785.

101. For eg. Colonel I Fletcher, who served the Malay Regiment in Ceylon for more than 20 years wrote about "the Ceylon Malays" in 1831 as follows: "The free Malays of the island are a superior race of people, possessing more intelligence. . . ..The Ceylon Malay is generally of honest and respectable parentage inheriting a pride of family reputation etc." S. L. N. A., 6/1308, A. M. S. to C. S., 5th October 1831.

102. de Hullu (1914), p. 342

103. Boxer (1975), p. 118

104. de Haan (1922), p. 473

105. de Haan, **Op.Cit.**, pp. 472-484

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

108. Vlekke (1945), p. 174

109. S. L. N. A. 1/1555. 11th October 1763.

110. Reimers (1924), p. 3. He quotes from a Dutch document dated 8th September 1660. "Where the Javanese soldiers 28 in number, have now for some time past suffered to be instructed in the Christian doctrine have made public profession there of, accepted Holy Baptism, and have solemnly married according to Christian rite. . . . ."

111. Du Plessis & Luckhoff (1953), p. 19.

XI

RECENT ARRIVAL OF MUSLIM TRADING COMMUNITIES IN SRI LANKA

Asker S. Moosajee

By the middle of the nineteenth century the British had consolidated their hold on their colonies and, controlled the Indian Ocean to the exclusion of the other European powers. Wherever the British writ ran, it was possible to travel without a Passport or Permit and, the Empire was an area of free and unrestricted movement to those who lived within its territories. It was open to those seeking trade or work to leave their own countries and, to seek their fortune in other lands. The main migrating movements were from the Indian Sub-Continent and China. The largest organised groups that were transferred from India were as indentured labour to develop new agricultural properties and, build roads and railways into the hinterland. Many Indian families were transferred to the Caribbean countries, South Africa, East Africa, Mauritius, Burma and Ceylon. These large scale movements of labour were confined to South Indian Tamils so far as Sri Lanka was concerned and, there were no followers of Islam amongst this group. The arrival of trading communities was essentially the result of individual decisions made by those seeking fresh pastures and, in the nineteenth century, many entrepreneurs came. Some belonging to the Islamic Faith. As their numbers grew they reproduced the community grouping to which they belonged.

One such community that has maintained its character are the Memons. The word describing them is a corruption of the Arabic "Moomeen" for it is a traditional belief that when Sayed Abdul Cader Jailani asked what they should call themselves on conversion to Islam had said "you are now Moomeen." The community are converts from LUHANA. Hindus were originally in the SIND province in India. They subsequently settled in

KUTHIANA JUNAGADH STATE. However, two groups developed based on their original location one being referred to as Kutchi Memons and, the other as Halais. There is no racial or religious difference between these groups but the territorial affinity is carried through even in-migration for at least two generations after which it falls into insignificance. It is this tight affinity to the group that preserves the distinctive nature and, it is characteristic of all those Muslim communities that have continued to preserve their individuality. The Memons are Hanafi Sunnis and, speak a dialect of Katchi called "Memni." The first Memon arrival to Ceylon was in 1870 when one Abdul Rahman who was generally referred to as Manna Sath started as an itinerant pedlar of textiles in Jaffna. He settled in the Pettah and built up a sizeable business. By 1927, the community was sufficiently large and well endowed to build the Memon Hanafi Masjid in 3rd Cross Street, Pettah. This was constructed solely from funds subscribed by the textile traders of the community. In 1935 a Masjid was built in Kandy.

Their main trade is textiles, although some large trading groups having branches throughout India and Burma had offices here. One such firm existing in 1907 was JANOO HASSAN who are described as "amongst the largest importers of rice in the Island; its turnover totalling some 400,000 bags per annum."(1)

The community has its own hall which is available for use by all communities. Whilst financially assisting numerous causes, one of which was the construction of the Boy Scout Headquarters in 1935, it has not participated actively in the social and political life of the Ceylon society. Today there are about 3000 Memons most of them in Colombo. There are some young men and women pursuing higher education and a number of Doctors, Lawyers and Accountants have qualified and practise their professions.

Many Muslim traders who have settled in Sri Lanka have integrated themselves into the main stream of the Muslim population. At one time there was a flourishing group commonly referred to as "Afghans." These were Muslims from Baluchistan who carried out small money lending businesses. These were a common sight in the business areas of Colombo and provincial towns where they plied their trade. Since it was only the men who came to the Island, they either made homes marrying locally or they would return to Baluchistan after a period of time. Along with their money lending business, there were others who worked as Watchers. Today this community with its distinctive identity does not exist in Sri Lanka.

In the same way, many traders from South India who are Muslims came to take up activity in the import and distributive trade. Since they were Tamil speaking and were of the same Islamic determination, it was easy to integrate and, no distinctive impressions of this large group remains. One exception is the Bhatkal community. These Muslims speak their own dialect and, also marry within themselves. There are now about fifty persons in Sri Lanka amongst whom are the families of Mr. Sayed Mohamed Moulana and Mr. M. H. Ismail, two well known names in the business community.

In this same way is the history of Mr. Mohammed El Dakkah a maker of Fez caps from Damascus, Syria, who came to Ceylon in 1902, when the Fez had become an important symbol for the Muslim image. The eldest daughter married Mr. Thabit Suby a Muslim Arab from Hadramuth who after serving in the Australian Army in the First World War broke journey on his sea voyage. From this union grew the Suby family who have an eminent place among Tea traders. There were other Arab settlers too but, their descendants have not maintained any special social and cultural traits.

The Bohras are Shias of the Islamic Mustalian Dawoodi Sect. The term "Bohra" is a derivative of "Vohra" which means trader. In the eleventh century, missionaries from Yemen arrived in Khambat – Gujarat province and, made converts from amongst the Naga Brahmins and Banias to this Sect. The Bohras subscribe to the basic tenets of Islam and, take due pride in the Islamic tradition. Its historic base is in the schismatic origin and development in Arabia and, the subsequent establishment of the Fatimid dynasty of Egypt whose rulers are revered as Holy Imams and, the continuation of the tradition in India.

The history of the Dawoodi Bohras is traced through Imam Ali, the son-in-law of Rassul-Allah through to twenty one Imams. Imam Ismail was the elder son of Imam Jaufeer-Us-Sadek and, there arose a dispute to the succession between those who accepted him as the successors and those who followed the younger son Musa Kazim. The Shias split into two major groups, the Ismailis and the Ithna Ashari (the twelvers–because of the twelve Imams in that line beginning with Ali). The Ismailis were from the onset a secret Religio-Political Mission organised into cells while scrupulously observing the practices laid down in the Islamic Shariat. The influence of Greek Philisophic concepts in viewing Islamic teachings resulted in the Quran and other Sayings being given a secret or hidden meaning (Batin) while observing the outward or open (Zahir) concepts.

The Imam was the Head and supported by the Bab ek Abwab or Chief Dai. The Islamic world was divided into twelve sections with a Hujja in charge and each had a number of Dais for particular regions. These Dais organised activities in their areas inducing people to join the Mission.

The Dai was assisted by a Madhun (one permitted to propagate) and a Mukasir (one who demolishes the arguments of opponents).

The Imams would be revealed or be hidden depending on the circumstances prevailing at a particular moment. The organisation would continue through its principal officers. The establishment of the Fatemid Dynasty by Imam Mahdi (AH 297) brought a period when the Ismaili doctrine became established although the structure of propagation continued as before. On the death of Imam Mustansir (AH 487) there was again a dispute to the succession between the eldest son Nizar and the youngest Mustali, resulting in two groups. The followers of Nizar are the Khojas or Aga Khanis and the Bohras follow Mustali. The 20th Imam and tenth Fatimid Caliph Imam Amr died in AH 514 and his infant son Tayyib is accepted as the last of the open (Zahir) Imams. It is a fundamental belief of the Bohras that the line of Imams continue without break but are "hidden" or behind the curtain and that at a propitious moment the Imam will return to reassert his rightful leadership.

The Imam's disappearance led to the Hujja of Yemen – Hurr al ul Maleha who was entrusted with the Dawat, or mission appointing a Dai ul Mutlaq to act as the representative of the Imam in order to keep the mission alive. From Yemen Missionaries came to India around 1050 AH and established converts. The 24th Dai ul Mutlaq Sayedna Yusuf Najmuddin was the first Indian Dai ul Mutlaq and from then the Dais have been based in India although there are some Yemeni followers of the faith.

In AH 1005 the succession was contested by Sheikh Daud Bin Kutub Shah and Shaikh Sulaiman both claiming that Nas-E-Jali (the conferring of the right of succession) had been rightfully conferred on them by their predecessor. This resulted in a further division. The Bohras accept the claim of Sheikh Dawood and, this explains the descriptive use of the term "Dawoodi Bohra". Today the 52nd Dai ul Mutlaq Sayedna Mohammed Burhanuddin continues the line of Dais. The Dais nominate their successors and, are assisted by a Mazun and Mukasir. Each community of Bohras is served by an Amil who is appointed by the Dai. He administers the Misaq or Oath of Allegiance which every Dawoodi Bohra has to take to become accepted by the Dai. The Bohras have exclusive Masjids of their own. They

are controlled by a strict code of obtaining "Raza" (permission) which extended to every activity – religious, social and political. Permission for naming an infant child, to marry or perform marriage and to be buried and, to even hold a community dinner ensures tight control of the followers. In recent years, a reform movement has become increasingly active to divest the control on social activity exercised by the Dai but, it has not had much effect.

The Bohras of Sri Lanka however, have no truck with any reform movement. They are orthodox and proud of it. A community of 1800 persons they are concentrated in Colombo with two small groups in Jaffna and Kandy.

In 1851, Mr. Jafferjee Esaji came to Galle where he set up business. He was the first Bohra to settle in Sri Lanka. He was followed by his relatives and friends from Cutch Mandvi a small port in Gujarat. By the end of the 19th century, there was a thriving community in Colombo engaged in a wide variety of commercial activity. Twentieth century impressions list ten Bohra firms. These are A. H. S. Jeevunjee & Co., Hoosenbhoy Mohamedbhoy Moosajee, Carimjee Jafferjee, A. E. S. Jeevunjee, Moosajee Mulla Ebhramjee, Gulam Hussein Shaiktayeb & Co. TAJ Noorbhai & Co., Moosbhoy Shaikh Hebtallabhoy Abdulally, Hassenally Dawoodbhoy and E. G. Adamally & Co. In addition to trading in rice, grain, sugar, maldive fish and other imports, these firms exported Ceylon produce: Some owned estates of tea, rubber, coconut and cinnamon. Some operated Buggalows (sailing vessels) plying between the Maldives and Sri Lanka. The Mohmedi Oil Mills employing 300 persons on 30 acres in Grandpass described as the principal native mill of the kind in Sri Lanka was owned and operated by a Bohra firm in 1905 and, one the community owned and, subsequently sold the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mill. Mr. Carimjee owned a country residence "Jaffer Villa" in Nuwara Eliya which building is now the Headquarters of the Army Regiment stationed in Nuwara Eliya and, prior to it was used as the Hill School, an Academy of Education for European Children.

The community has Masjids in Pettah and Bambalapitiya Colombo and in Jaffna. It has its own Madrassah and Jamat Khana (Community Hall). Also it maintains its own exclusive burial-ground in Kuppiawatte.

The Bohras have taken part in the social life of the community, contributed to charities and, also taken part in civic affairs. Mr. Carimjee Jafferjee was a donor towards Zahira College and the Lady Havelock Hospital. Adamjee Lukmanjee built the Maternity Hospital in Prince of Wales

Avenue and, in recent years, donations to Medical Institutions, Religious Organisations, Libraries and many other charities have been made by the Bohra community.

The Colombo Municipal Council has had Mr. Kurban Adamally as Deputy Mayor and, he served as a Senator for over twelve years. Mr. S. H. Moosajee was an elected member of the Colombo Municipal Council and, Mr. Adamally Mamujee and Mr. Alibhoy Dawoodbhoy served as nominated members.

The Bohras have preserved their special characteristics because they brought their wives and families to the countries where they settled. They have also married within their own group and, have maintained their communal organisation which is close knit and centrally controlled. Thus, when independence was granted the decision to become nationals of Ceylon was an obvious one. Professionals among the Bohras exist. There are Doctors. Dr. Hazari is a well known name with three generations practising medicine here and, there are others too who have specialised in this line. Although there are qualified Lawyers and Accountants, they have tended to be absorbed in their own business interests.

Similar to the Bohras but distinct from them are the Khojas. This community are Shia, Ismaili Nizarians and share the same religious origins as the Bohras but differ in that they believe in the succession through Imam Nizr and the continuity of the direct line of descendants from Imam Ali to the present Imam Kasim Aga Khan who is the 49th in succession. Unlike the Bohras who have maintained the observance of the Shariat, the Khojas have from time to time deviated from the strict compliance to the Shariat Laws. However, in recent years the Imam has ordered a return to the compliance of Islamic precepts.

The Khojas are converts to Islam from the same group in India as the Bohras and, missionary activity from this branch, which prevailed in Iran after the Fatimid Dynasty, took place in India at about the same time. The Imamat moved in the 19th century (AD) to India when the other Shia Sect in Iran (Ithna Ashari) which is in the majority objected to the breakaway as heretical.

The Khojas have only a few families in Sri Lanka and, those who are here have come to the Island after 1918. The Shia Khojas are a very progressive and dynamic community. In Sri Lanka their total numbers are about fifty persons and, include the Chattoor, Rheimoo and Meru families. They have

their own Jamat Khana and, in spite of their small size have maintained their cultural identity.

Past records show that there were other Muslim groups represented in Sri Lanka in times past. Sunni Khojas and Ithna Shari Shias have ceased to be present and, those that do are just individuals or isolated families.

In their time as now, these Muslims have added to the Kaleidoscope of communities that make up the people of Sri Lanka.

* * *

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XII

A SOCIOLOGY OF MUSLIMS IN SOUTHERN INDIA AND SRI LANKA

A. Muhammad Ma'ruf

The region

This paper is conceived as a study of some aspects of the sociology of the Muslims of a region rather than of a country. This conception requires some clarification. The Muslims of this region exist within two separate political dominions, namely Sri Lanka and India and are more than likely to continue to exist within such separate entities for a long time more. Moreover, the Indian Republic which houses the southern Indian Muslim populations discussed here is also the home of several million other Muslims, living north of the state boundaries of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. They are not included within the scope of this analysis.

However, if one were to take a holistic and anthropological view comprising parameters of linguistic affinity, cultural development, and socio-economic organization there are many senses in which the approximately eight million Muslim inhabitants of Kerala, Lakhshadwip, Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka form a distinct sub-category among the larger category of Asian Muslims. To make up such a sub-category is not to imply anything political. Far from it. It is simply a device to broaden the horizons for a scientific understanding of the Muslim *umma* (community), by basing the study on a portion of the society living in a contiguous land and ocean mass; on a natural rather than a recent political criterion.

Muslim minority: the problem of definition

The entire Muslim *umma* is but one society, in the idealization of it as well as in the normative reality of the *Shari'a* which elucidates its constitution. From a social scientific view, however, the Quranic metaphor that describes the community, and *Shari'a* are only part of the criteria by which we may arrive at a definition of a community. Other evidences

in regard to common patterns of behaviour and the common understanding of the rules by which behaviour is evaluated by individuals within the community and outside of the community are necessary before a complete picture of what we are talking about and thinking about can be arrived at.

In the region under review the label "Muslim minority" is a cliche more than an expression denoting a measurable social entity. It is derived, at least in part, from colonial and recent post colonial history and its enigmas and not from the concept of society envisioned in Islam. Muslims in South India and Sri Lanka have adopted it in the initial steps of their process of resuscitating themselves from the savage injuries inflicted upon them during the early years of European rule over this region. The expression has also gained some currency in international gatherings of Muslims *(vide, journal of Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs,* particularly Vol.3:2 (1981): 5-9; Abdullah, (1983). The expression has a symbolic connotation, specific undertones of which differ from one context of its usage to another. The colonial historical conditions from which this particular minority idea was born have changed. More significantly other changes are taking place very quickly in our own generations. Among such changes is the fact that we are becoming more knowledgeable about ourselves. Scholarly discussions on the Muslim community that are being held with an increasing frequency are an important aspect of that. In the process of increasing self-awareness, we may want to re-examine our traditional view of ourselves and perhaps to change it. We have become accustomed to asking ourselves who we are only in the context of attempting to answer that question when put to us by some other – particularly someone like a census taker who we see as a representative of "the Government." But we need to get accustomed to asking ourselves that question for our own reasons and to be able to answer that question objectively and scientifically, without loss of advantage to ourselves, and because we want to know that answer ourselves.

I think it is pertinent to mention here that it is difficult for individual Sri Lankan or most Asian Muslims not to realize several rather embarrassing aspects of themselves as their understanding of themselves increases. Take some of their names for instances. The Arabic Muhammad becomes Mohamed or some other form; Ma'ruf becomses Maharoof or Mauroof; Abd al Ghafur becomes A Cafoor. The proper historical and socio-linguistic understanding of what has happened in the mispronunciation and mistransliteration processes has to lead to some changes (see Al-Ja'fari, 1977) and some complications in regard to official papers, etc. But it is better to think it out and make those changes late than never.

Similarly, it seems to me, it is better that we are talking here about Muslims rather than about Moors. Further, as we proceed we will also want to ask, "In what sense are we a minority ?" which is, of course, related to the question of "In what sense are all Sri Lankans a nation ?" An important part of the answer to the first question has to come from the personal awareness and consciousness of the Muslims and of our leaders of the future.

History and language

At this point mention must be made of the historical and linguistic aspects of Muslims in this area. It is well known that the earliest contacts of Islam with the region were made via the merchandise laden dhows that sailed on the oceans connecting the coasts of the Arabian peninsula with the ports of southern India and the islands which surround it. It was that maritime traffic that carried the message of Seyyedina Muhammad *(saAw)* in the olden days. Two enduring consequences of that ancient maritime trade link (which already existed before the *hijra* (journey) of the Makkan Muslims to Madinah) are fundamental to the concerns of this paper: One was the establishment of Muslim communities along the coastal territories of the region and the other the innumerable ways in which the lives of the Muslims of the region came to be intertwined with their occupations as traders. A common maxim amongst all the Muslims in the region, coastal as well as inland, merchants as well as peasants, even today is (in rough translation from Tamil): Sail the deep oceans if you have to, and so seek the wealth.

The linguistic feature that serves to define the Muslims of the region as a distinct entity is that their languages are Dravidian, separating them from the Muslims who speak Urdu and other Indo-Aryan related languages of the sub-continent. Thus, in Karnatak state neighbouring Kerala and Tamil Nadu the state language is one derived from Dravidian but the traditional language of the Muslims is the unrelated Urdu. It is commonly assumed that the Muslims of Kerala, Lakhshadwip, Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka have no separate language as such; that their everyday language is traceable to the ancient, pre-islamic, Dravidian roots of the region. There are, however, patterns of usage that serve to distinguish Muslim Malayalam and Muslim Tamil from other dialects of Malayalam and Tamil. In the domains of religion the Muslims share a common vocabulary and familiarity with Arabic, which they do not share with Dravidian speakers. What is not so well known and what needs to be noted here as deserving the attention of some scholars of the future, is the extent to which Dravidian on one side and West Asian Semitic languages on the other have affected each other in domains relating to the parlance of trade and trading activities.

Such are some of the unanswered questions on the history of language of the Muslims. For the present and for the future, the important questions related to language for Sri Lankan Muslims would be not on Arabic-Tamil as much as on Arabic-Sinhala and Arabic-English. Issues related to language are quite relevant to the discussion of the definition of Muslim communities in the region. Research on questions related to Sinhala and English is essential for the derivation of any definition of our community that looks towards the future and not only at the past.

Such questions have either not been posed or have not been answered adequately in the little research that has been done so far on Muslim minorities. In fact, there is an alarming inadequacy of literature focussed on the Muslims of the region in regard to their material, social and cultural conditions. Many elementary concepts necessary at the level of defining Muslims in the region as a community or as an economic entity have hardly been touched upon in the voluminous social scientific literature in the English language on South Asia and even in official reports of governments. The need for a great deal more research on the social and economic conditions of Muslims living in all parts of southern Asia cannot be overstated. The expectation that this research may have already been done in the South Asia Studies Departments in the U.S. and other Western countries is not well-founded at all. What is called South Asian Studies in the U.S. is much more often than not studies of India and her non-Muslim peoples. A whole study could be devoted to the prevailing prejudices against the development of studies of the Muslims of South Asia amongst most Western and Western-educated Muslim scholars. The situation in regard to this seems to have changed little since Eric Gustafson challenged the Berkeley South-Asianists on the situation, calling it "a disgrace" (1966:1). There has been nothing of value to the Muslims that has come out of the increase in the awareness of the Muslims that has transpired since. From an academic standpoint, Peter Mayer writing recently on studies of the politics of Indian Muslims, an area that has received much more attention than any other, says that it is a subject that "yearly generates a great deal of impressionistic writing but dismayingly little concrete analysis." Studies of Islam in India all too often, "have used methodologies that have not been subjected to the rigorous criticism they deserve. Having gone unchallenged these methodological errors have been reproduced again and again." They all rest on an "incorrect foundation," (Mayer 1981:481-2). Not much is known about the economic and social conditions of Muslims in the region. What is said to be known is often unreliable and superficial.

Populations

We may begin the evaluation of such knowledge by surmising that when speaking of the Muslims of the region (Southern India and Sri Lanka) we are speaking of an aggregate of about eight million people, declared as Muslim, living amidst an approximate total of 83 million people. But we do not know much about who these Muslims are and how they live.

The geography and demography of Muslims in the region are presented in maps I and II.[1] The first map attempts to place the Muslim population figures for the Southern Indian and Sri Lankan region in relation to Muslim population figures for the rest of Asia. The second is an attempt to describe the areas of large Muslim concentrations within our region.

The macro data presented in the maps require many kinds of micro information to be interpreted properly. Such information, which would require more detailed studies devoted to understanding the socio-economic structures within the population aggregates, is not all available at present. Even the regularly published Indian official District Gazetteers, when dealing with Muslims, continue to repeat the same shallow, outdated and misleading information that Thurston (1909) reported so many years ago. Neither official publications nor others have come to sociological and ethnological grips with issues pertaining to the extent of variation amongst the Muslims. Information on the nature of the economic, linguistic or other boundaries which unite (or separate) the multifarious Muslim conglomerations with each other and with other non-Muslim groups is similarly not available (see TNBCCR I: 3,236ff, 241, 263;II: 19-20, 40, 42, 121; Mauroof, 1976; Mines, 1975). In the absence of any clear studies on the nature and significance of such sub-group labels as Rawther, Marakkayer, Lebbe, Sonahar, Moor, Malay, Pathan, Sayyid, Mappilla and many others amongst the Muslims of the region, particularly as they pertain to socio-economic activity, one has to be content with the simple aggregate information based on stated religious preference alone to define ethnicity and group affiliation. This, however, is not very solid ground to stand on. Clearly there is a need here for many more studies of specific communities.

The trading sector

The Muslims of the region have a reputation as a trading community. In fact the scanty information available on the early history of Muslims in the region from a period of time over a thousand years ago depicts them as traders. This legendary reputation persists. Part of the old habits, aptitudes, and customs have survived, and some families have thrived on them to this day.

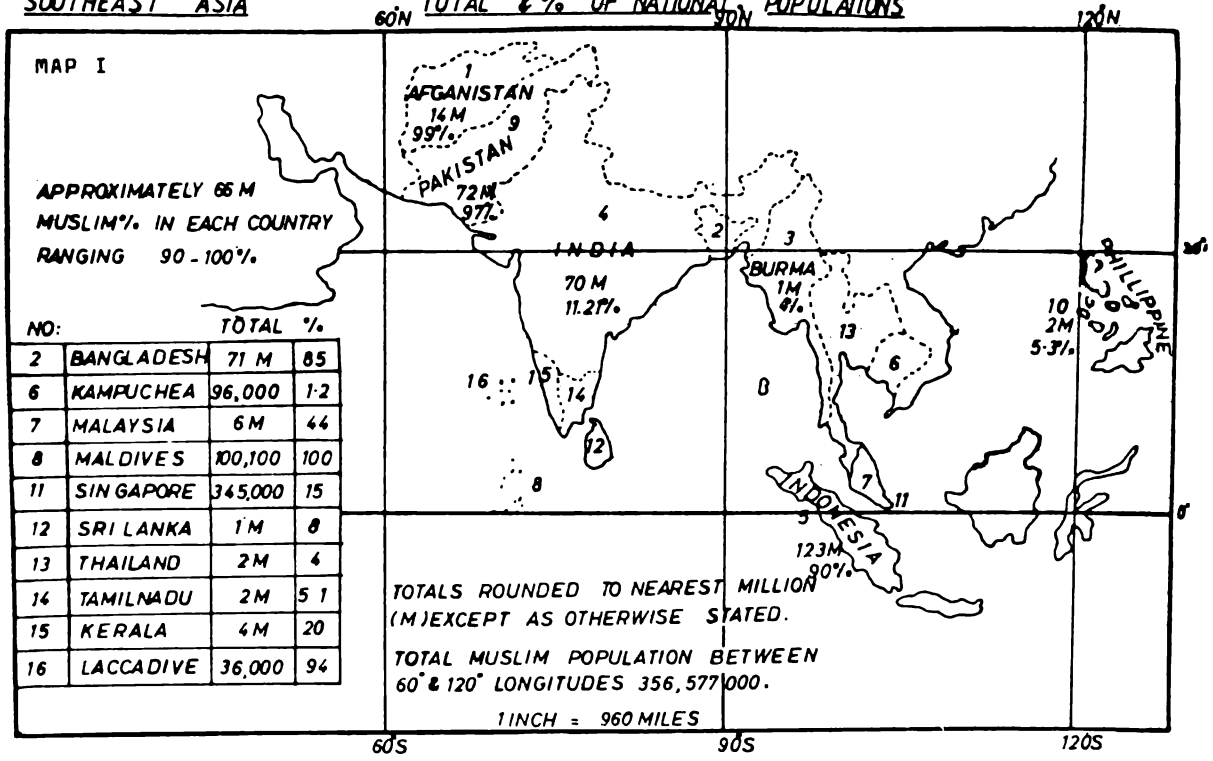
Observers of Muslim communities in all parts of this region have noticed this feature. D'Souza (1973:54) refers to a whole Muslim lineage of big bankers and merchants in Kerala. Manickam (1974:270-272) and Miller (1976:195) also refer to Muslim businessmen in that state who have enjoyed successes in import-export, contracting, and merchandising enterprises. An entire monograph by Mines (1972) is concerned with the social and economic aspects of a Muslim merchant community in Tamil Nadu. He points out (p. 62, 65) a basic contrast in the ethos of the Hindu as opposed to the Muslim in the state: a Hindu would seek satisfaction and fulfillment in a state bureaucratic career while a Muslim would seek the same in a business career. In a survey that he conducted for his study he found that all Muslim groups he questioned claimed "Merchant" as their primary occupation. These observations would seem to show a pattern common to Muslims of both states. This pattern (see also TNBCCR II: 52-3, 153) extends into the socio-economic picture of Muslims in Sri Lanka too (see Mauroof, 1976).

An element of the commonality of interest and engagement in trading activities is the accruing result of it in the network of Muslim traders and trading kinship groups across state and national boundaries. Such networks connect and bind, sometimes for generations, the Muslim traders of southern India and Sri Lanka with each other as well as with traders in south-east Asia in Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, Thailand and so on, as well as with traders from West Asian and more recently European nations. Such networks spanning the whole region and sometimes reaching out beyond it are significant, only in that they seem to have provided a needed informal and social support to the trading sector of the Muslim economy of the region for a long time. The amount of trade that is carried along the routes of these networks is, however, not much. In gross product the contribution of such traders to the total amount of trade that goes on amongst these neighbouring countries is now insubstantial.

These networks seem to have an effect on other sectors of the economy also. Gough (1969:42) notes the sale of land in a Thanjavur village by impoverished Brahman landlords to business and professional men from neighbouring areas. Some of the buyers belonged, "to a modern bourgeois of Muslim businessmen. . . who originally acquired cash as coolies in Malaya". Gough's observations were made in the early 50s. Today a related pattern is noticed among those who return from lucrative employment in West-Asian countries. Until recently, however, the bulk of Muslim labourer cum businessman type of migrants from Southern India were limited to other Southeast Asian countries. It is notable that while in most Tamil Nadu districts, for Muslims and the district as a whole, males

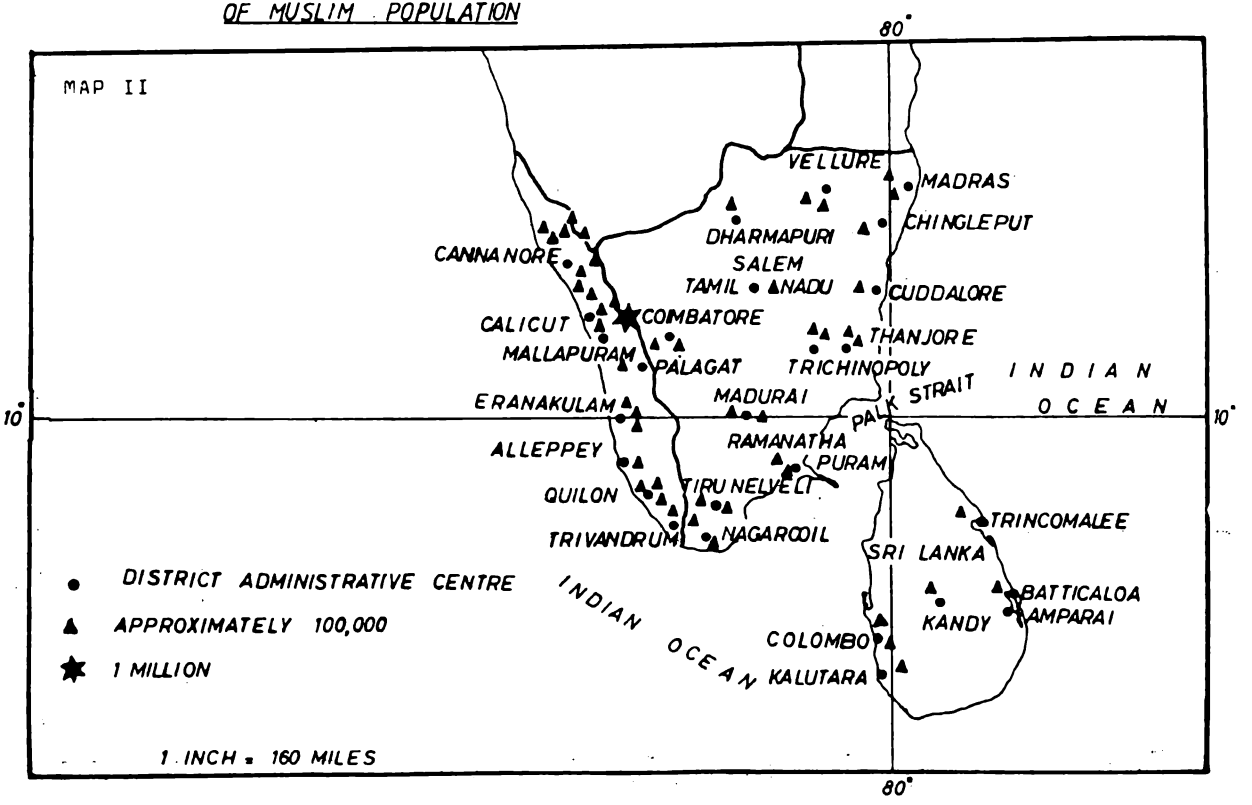
MUSLIM POPULATIONS: SOUTHERN INDIA, SRI LANKA AND OTHER LANDS – SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

TOTAL & % OF NATIONAL POPULATIONS



NO:		TOTAL	%
2	BANGLADESH	71 M	85
6	KAMPUCHEA	96,000	1·2
7	MALAYSIA	6 M	44
8	MALDIVES	100,100	100
11	SINGAPORE	345,000	15
12	SRI LANKA	1 M	8
13	THAILAND	2 M	4
14	TAMILNADU	2 M	5 1
15	KERALA	4 M	20
16	LACCADIVE	36,000	94

SOUTHERN INDIA & SRI LANKA : MAJOR CONCENTRATIONS OF MUSLIM POPULATION



are more numerous than females, in Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram and Thanjavur Districts, which are closer to the sea, there are slightly more females than males among the Muslims. The higher proportion of females is true for the total district population also in Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram (see Census of India, Series —19). Absentee husbands, fathers and brothers working overseas may be an explanation.

It needs to be noted here, in assessing the actual value of the trading sector to the whole Muslim community of the area, that it accounts for the occupational and employment needs of only a very few people. In spite of the trading reputation of the community as a whole, even amongst adult males, there are many more who are not traders than there are traders. Manickam *(op. cit.)* says of the Mappilla Muslims of Kerala:

> "the great bulk (of them) belong purely to the labouring classes. . ., among these classes the pinch of poverty is most keenly felt.....as a rule the Mappilla Muslims are miserably poor..... agrarian grievances keep them in chronic unrest which has flared repeatedly into open rebellion ...."

The experience of the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Commission (1969-70) vis–a–vis the Muslims in Tamil Nadu, the state in which Mines conducted his study of a Muslim merchant community *(op. cit.)*, reveals the insignificance of the trading sector in the economy of the Muslim populations of the area (see TNBCCR I: 3,230–242). A group of underprivileged Muslims noted as Labbais in government records since British times were included in the list of "Backward Classes" that the Commission was appointed to investigate. But when the Commission began its sittings they found that all Muslims wanted to be included as one category to be called Labbai or some other designation and included among the "Backward Classes" list. Among those who wanted to be included were those groups who, perhaps due to sociological reasons, had changed their sub-group affiliation to the more prestigious Syed, Sheikh, Pathan and other such names; as well as the Rawthers and Marakkayers – the traditional trading families. Even the trader variety of Tamil Nadu Muslims would rather take a lower position in the social hierarchy than forego a few benefits of government assistance that they may have possibly (not definitely) become entitled to.

It is, then, not unreasonable to suppose that the trade that they were engaged in did not amount to much, for themselves or for the community as a whole.

In Sri Lanka also Muslims have a reputation as traders and businessmen. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Mauroof 1976, 1980) this reputation should not fool anyone. The larger concentrations of the Muslim population in the island are in agricultural, not commercial regions. Even where there are concentrations in urban, commercial areas (and Muslim population concentration, like the concentration of populations of other minorities in urban areas, is a pattern in Sri Lanka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu), the vast majority of the people are certainly not wealthy businessmen. In fact they are poor and unemployed (cf. Grosse, 1981).

Of those who are classified as traders in the region itself (by themselves or by others) a few may be wealthy (D'Souza, *op. cit.;* Mauroof, *op. cit.).* Some of them have attained fame also as industrialists (TNBCCR II; 42-3, 153). But the larger portion of them are petty traders. Ittaman (1974) provides some figures on the size of the (Muslim) businesses in Lakhshadwip: the largest two, out of a total of 53 businesses had an annual business turnover of "more than Rs.20,000," i.e., roughly U.S.$ 2,500. Lakhshadwip, of course, is a tiny community. But the capital asset figures (calculated from the working investment as there is hardly any difference between the two in these businesses) that Mines has provided *(op. cit.* : 48–49) for the Muslim businesses he investigated in Tamil Nadu are no more encouraging.

Of the 26 businesses that he considered from a sample survey of all the businesses in the town more than half had a working investment of less than Rs.500. The largest businesses had working investments of between Rs.50,000 ($ 6,250) and Rs. 100,000 ($ 12,500). Their capital turnover time was 3–6 months.

The literature on the trading sector of the Muslim community raise several interesting questions for further research, some of which are:

(1) How is the investment capital actually generated ? Are there new ways that the community should be exploring to raise capital ?

(2) Is the management of Muslim businesses the result of modern training or is success in business seen simply as a matter of chance ?

(3) Should Muslim educational institutions look carefully into the possibility of incorporating modern, technical management training as part of their curricular ?

In contrast, contemporary developments seem to aid the subsistence and cash crop cultivators who form the majority of the workers among the approximately 8 million Muslims in the region. Among such developments are the new land reform Acts that Kerala and Sri Lanka promulgated in the late sixties and early seventies. A careful study of the effects of the Kerala Land Reform Act (UN, 1975: 59-69) has concluded that the abolition of tenancy by the Act would have had a significant effect in reducing income inequality in those parts of the State which were formerly part of the British administered province of Madras. These parts, northern Kerala since 1956, comprise the following districts with concentrations of Muslims: Cannanore, Kozhikode, Mallapuram and Palghat. If the potential benefits accruing from this legislation are realized to optimum levels, future historians may look back upon the reforms as the single most important action of this century to benefit the most number of Muslims in the entire region; the well known and much criticized struggles in this regard, especially in Kerala for the last 100 years by Muslims, (see Dale, 1980: Mauroof, 1981) may not have been in vain.

The reallzation of this potential depends on the utilization of the land made available which depends on efficiency, levels of technical assistance and other management criteria. This is a specific area which deserves the attention of those who make policies and programs for community welfare.

Some possible impediments to the utilization process may be noted. Corporate joint family ownership (a characteristic also of urban trading families, see Mines 1972: 305) may tend to inhibit efficient management and lead to eventual parcelling out of property, particularly land, into increasingly smaller and inefficient units. Furthermore, some of the joint family systems in the area, noted in studies in Kerala (D'Souza, *op. cit.),* Sri Lanka (Mauroof, 1976, McGilvray, 1974), and Lakhshadwip (Dube, 1969) are matrilineal systems, practising matrilineal inheritance, in spite of the fact that the families practising the law have been Muslim for generations. The contradictions of rules coming from such systems with the *Shari'a* law are likely to add to the prevalent confusions and pressures of changing social and cultural environments. Not all families in these areas adhere to matrilineal principles; but a large number of them do. Islamisation of customs relating to property rights may have to precede other progressive changes. Dube (1969: 27 – 42) notes that among Kalpeni islanders (Lakhshadwip) "Monday" properties, i.e., properties acquired by an individual or to which an individual becomes the only heir, may

come under the jurisdiction of the *Shari'a*. These are a small proportion of all properties. She offers no information, however, on whether one system is more productive than the other.

Education and employment

By grouping these two very significant parameters together, I only mean to emphasize the direct usefulness or lack thereof of educational endeavours in regard to wage-earning employment. It is not to degrade the other considerable potential benefits of education (cultural, humanistic, etc.) which could have an indirect bearing on economic opportunities and community uplift. Thus, an increase in social awareness which better education can provide may help to subside inter-communal rivalry in society which in turn may increase the chances of employment for minority communities. Signs of realization of such potentialities are, at present absent.

In considering the broad array of information relative to the combined interaction of education and employment for this region, what impresses one most is the lack of any significant advantage of the educated over the uneducated in regard to securing or maintaining wage-earning capacities.

Accounts of the region as a whole contain many odes and praises for significant advances made in literacy and educational levels, especially during the last four decades. However, the region as a whole is also one of chronic under-employment and unemployment. In fact, the problem of large numbers of educated unemployed youths, segments of whom are gradually resorting to violence and terrorism, has emerged as a peculiar problem among all communities, majority as well as minority, in all parts of the area.

The question to be asked in studying the education-employment picture is whether the system of education provides a means for the larger parts of local populations suffering the humiliations of poverty, to escape from it. Some of the conclusions of an in-depth study of the conditions as they exist in Kerala for the population of Kerala as a whole are pertinent:

> "Education has a broad base in Kerala and the drop-out rates are significantly lower than in the rest of India; this has widened the scope for vertical mobility. Free schooling and inadequate growth of employment opportunities have, however, led to prolongation of the period of education with no significant gains in the labour market

for those concerned (since the waiting period for placement is long, and the incomes are not much higher than for un-skilled labour with less education); the lower social strata are also at a greater disadvantage as the waiting periods are longer in their case. Only a small proportion of those who complete schooling go on to higher education, and the share of the lower social strata in this process is much smaller since higher education is not free. Those with higher education have shorter waiting periods before finding work but, if the period spent in education is included as part of the waiting period, and if the incomes at which they are hired are taken into account, the differential advantage gained appears to be more social than economic." (U.N. :1975:4. See also Chap. IX).

Education, then, especially the type of education provided in Kerala as in other parts of the region can be expected to play only a limited role in reducing social and economic inequalities.

The effect of this situation on the Muslims of Kerala may be gauged from some of the information that Miller (1976:192-96, 204-211) has presented. He notes that by 1974 the Mappillas, i.e., the major Muslim community in Kerala, had made impressive strides in the provision and realization of educational facilities; by then there were about 700 lower and upper primary schools under Muslim management in the state; there were about 36 highschools (public and private); Muslims also had 9 first grade colleges and several technical institutions. But employment statistics collected a few years previously had shown that the new stream of Muslim candidates, the products of the growing emphasis on education by Muslims, were already destined to be frustrated. The saturation effect of the Kerala population had become complete and jobs were the rarest of jewels for which Mappilla B.A.s were competing with Hindu and Christian M.A.s.

Comparable information is not available for Tamil Nadu. However, the following provided by the TNBCCR (Vol. 11:43) from a 1970 survey is pertinent: It is said that there has been considerable progress in Muslim education in Tamil Nadu in recent years due to Government efforts as well as a "new spirit" among the Muslims. However, the literacy rate for Muslims (10%–20%) is lower than for other communities. The "new spirit" of recent years is apparently behind the founding of 50 to 60 high schools and about 10 colleges sponsored by Muslim private donations. The Commission also notes the neglect of the education of Muslim girls and names 39 areas where the need for it is very high. The Commission has also noted (Vol. II:126) that Muslims living in Kanyakumari District, an area

of high literacy and educational levels complain of discrimination against them in admission to colleges managed by Christian missionaries.

Several writers on the comparable situation in Sri Lanka have suggested that the differential advantage accruing to Sri Lankan Muslims due to special privileges intended to offset the accumulated discrimination of several prior centuries, combined with the favour of a Muslim Education Minister had the effect of increasing the rate of Muslim employment in the late sixties and seventies. This story publicised in popular talk and in newspapers and given credence by repetition in scholarly journal articles may not be accurate (see brief discussion in Mauroof, 1980). A preliminary analysis by P. Wilson intended to test this *(vide* f.n. 7, p. 192, *ibid.)* revealed that the gains supposed to be made by a newly emergent class of educated Muslims amounts to nothing statistically. The correlation of the level of unemployment (the highest in the country for Muslims) is with ethnicity (being Muslim), residence (the district of the country in which one resides) and some other factors.

The gains that Muslims have made in education in Sri Lanka and Kerala and are making in Tamil Nadu in the 20th century would thus seem to have provided the community with only the bare basics required for modern survival and living. The heavy promotional endeavours for education that characterize the recent history of these communities have not paid off in terms of the number of gainfully employed. However, it is possible that they have helped in opening up avenues of employment in foreign countries, e.g. in West Asia, for a few of the beneficiaries.

This situation, if true, raises a number of questions: Is it possible that a shift in emphasis from outmoded, pre-modern, British type "Arts and Science" education to a modern technical and technologically oriented one would change this dismal pattern ? Changes toward an employment oriented educational system have been slow in coming. Part of the reason for this is the heavy capital expenditures needed to begin such a process. The sceneries depicted by educational planning strategies observable in Muslim community processes show a lack of awareness of the need for the procurement of such a technological base. Even if there were an awareness of that aspect the capital needed for its procurement seem unavailable, except in miniscule amounts. How to galvanize the forces needed for this change to occur is a question of paramount importance for the future. Research directed towards unravelling the problems in this regard is much needed.

Occupations and caste ideology

Another question that requires further research and discussion than has taken place so far, is the relationship of patterns of social organization amongst Muslims to casteist ideologies prevalent amongst other groups in the region. The Muslim peoples of the region are not, in spite of the connotations of whatever U. S. anthropologists (see *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 1974: Art: Caste) and their Hindu and Muslim votaries (e.g. in Ahmad ed. 1973) in India may have to say, a caste in the Hindu sense, i.e., the occupational or ritual rank senses. There are some occupations that certain groups of Muslims have followed traditionally. The employment and recruitment of some persons – e.g., that of 'circumciser' as in McGilvray (1976) – may have depended on membership in certain kinship groupings. But the limitations imposed on the individual's choice of occupations by custom and tradition would exercise a coercive influence only to the extent that the economy itself provides a limited range of opportunities. Thus, it is not at all uncommon for people to change their hereditary occupations when they get the opportunity to do so (see Mauroof 1976). Ittaman, (1974) like many other observers of Muslim society in the region, while noticing this trend does not recognize that the dynamics of this process tend to cancel out the basis of his classification of Muslims in Amindiv, according to caste occupations.

Secondly, we may note that in spite of the association of certain groups of Muslims with certain occupations for several generations, Muslims as a whole in a particular part or in the entirety of the region do not have a particular hereditary occupation as such. In fact, all reports indicate that traditionally they have been following a variety of occupations. In addition to various kinds of traders there are amongst them cotton cleaners and mattress makers (TNBCCR: II:20), fishermen *(ibid:* 139), potato cultivators – a new occupation for the region –*(ibid:* 180–183), sailors and ferrymen, plantation workers, leather workers, rock splitters, well-diggers, log-splitters, sepoys (Manickam, 1974: 270), butchers, gem cutters, weavers (Mauroof, 1976) coconut pluckers, coin makers, captains of sailing vessels, barbers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths (Ittaman, 1974:190-192) and so on. The list can be extended even more (TNBCCR 1:43). Amongst all such varied, hereditarily acquired, and low paid occupations, the category that seems to employ most of the poorer Muslims seem to be that of agricultural worker. Improvements in the land-ownership structure in Kerala referred to earlier and the consequent changes in the conditions of agricultural labour and wage rates (see U. N., 1975:87-97) may have benefited those Muslims who are employed in this sector also. Specific figures on Muslim gains in this employment however, are not available and need to be obtained.

Summary and conclusion

This paper has concentrated on a number and a variety of questions regarding the sociology of Muslims of this region. These questions have occurred to me over several years of observation of Muslim phenomena and search in published and unpublished literatures that touch on the Muslims of the region.

In regard to each of the parameters of linguistic structures and processes, cultural development, and socio-economic organization that would be minimally necessary before a proper description of the community may be attempted there seem to be more blank spaces than filled ones. What has been presented so far attempts to highlight the shortcomings of available information in regard to specific questions pertaining to:

a) the definition of Southern Asian Muslims as a minority;
b) the economic infra-structures that support the community; and
c) some of the ideological underspinnings that seem to affect the analytic categories hitherto employed in some studies of the Muslims of this region.

Segments of the literature examined in the generation of this paper also address the social and other problems that Muslims in the area perceive as afflicting them and the solutions that have been proposed (see in particular, Miller, 1976). The solutions that the Muslims have worked on may be summarized as follows:

(a) Political: as e.g., in the history of the tremendous effort of the Muslim League to obtain power in Kerala.

(b) Educational and reformist: Typified by the history of the Muslim Educational Society of Kerala and by the record of a wide range of public personalities and groups – all with the aid, power and prestige of modern secular education – in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka and the Laccadives.

(c) Philanthropic: A solution offered by a few wealthy individuals by offering whatever material resources they could towards causes and individuals whom they personally considered worthy of support and care.

Obligations engendered to the *Shari'a* are apparently part of the motivation for the third type. However, Islam itself as relating to the lives

of Muslims and therefore, to the solution of their problems is not a very significant element of most of the conceptualizations of the prevailing conditions or their solutions. Occasionally, a few assumptions regarding Islamic doctrine have entered into disputes on whether specific solutions offered (such as family planning, modernistic methods for the collection and disbursement of *zakah* funds) are acceptable or not.

Such disputes mainly indicate a division of the intellectual leadership of the community into two separate camps: the religious and irreligious *ulema.* In this there is a threat to the very basis of the solidarity of the communities within themselves and with each other in neighbouring places. This moral weakness is central to all the woes of the Muslims – economic, social, religious and otherwise – and is by no means a problem for the Muslims of this region only.

The prevailing separateness of stances and views between the religious and irreligious intellectual leadership directly affects the academic understanding of the problem and indirectly the efforts that are undertaken to solve the problems. The uniting of these camps at the level of leadership producing feedback processes from one camp to the other is something that I, for one, would like to see. Such cross-cultural communication would be productive to the sociological enterprise as well as provide for the upliftment of religious education. Such processes would increase the meaningfulness of abstract sociological and anthropological reasoning for practising professionals as well as to the lay public. Some currents of opinion in Islamic study circles in other parts of the world have already begun to pave the philosophical way toward such processes (see e.g., Al-Faruqi, 1982). It is my hope that we should strive to make the domains of our concern wider and wider so that it becomes more and more open to the sociologist and Islamicist, the educated and the not so educated, the Muslim, the Buddhist, the Hindu, and the Christian. The more of us who attempt to grapple with these problems in a systematic manner, the more likely we are to come closer to the next step in the path toward understanding the society, economy and culture of the Muslims of this region.

FOOTNOTES

1. The following sources have been consulted in the preparation of the maps: *Britannica Atlas,* 1970; *Census Reports* for 1974; Miller, 1976; and Weekes (ed.), 1978. The population figures for the Muslims of China are controversial (cf. Weekes, *ibid.,* with Chisti, 1980). In almost all cases the population data used were collected in the 1970s. CIA (1976) is a valuable compendium of information on the history, physical environments and resources, climate, shipping, trade routes, etc., of this area.

   Strictly speaking the Muslim inhabitants of the Maldive Islands would also form a part of the vaster Arabian Sea region under discussion in this paper. However, since the main concern of this paper is with the "minority" situation, they were not included in the discussion.

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XIII

MUSLIMS OF SRI LANKA – A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

M. A. M. Shukri

The aim and objective of this paper is to identify certain cultural traits of the Muslim Community of Sri Lanka as reflected in religious thought, language and traditions. The initial setback one encounters in this field is the paucity of documentary evidences and lack of other materials that would facilitate a study of this nature. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, one is able to get a glimpse of the cultural life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka from the living traditions of Muslim society which is really speaking, the legacy of the cultural forces that shaped the Muslim past in Sri Lanka.

Before we embark on the subject proper, namely the cultural perspectives of Muslims of Sri Lanka, we must familiarize ourselves with a background knowledge of the historical forces that moulded and patterned the religious and cultural traditions of the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

The central position of Sri Lanka between Africa, India and China, made it a busy centre of commercial activities from a very early time, and its spices and gems, for which it had acquired international fame, drew to its shores travellers from various parts of the world. One of the ancient nations to trade with Sri Lanka was Arabia to whom, Sri Lanka was known as "Jaziratul Yaqut"[1] or the "Island of Rubies." The Arabian peninsula, which is on the whole, a barren land surrounded on all three sides by water, depended heavily on its maritime trade for its economic prosperity during the pre-Islamic period. Pre-Islamic poetry is full of references to these commercial activities. The commercial relationship between Arabia and China had been established long before the birth of the Prophet of Islam. During the heyday of Iranian supremacy, and before the conquest of Iraq by the Arabs in 14 A. H., ships came from China to

anchor at the port of "Ubla," an old port of Iranian commerce situated in the Persian Gulf and then carried the cargo and merchandise from this port to India and China.[2]

Sri Lanka occupied a pivotal point on this trade between the eastern and western world, and Arabs became the intermediaries of the trade between Europe and Asia. Ships from the Indian seaports and Sri Lanka reached West Yemen (Saba) and from there, the merchandise used to be transported by caravans travelling through Hijaz from south to north to reach Egypt.

With the advent of Islam in the middle of the 6th century, and the subsequent expansion of the Muslim empire under the Caliphs, the Arab commercial activity also received fresh impetus. Due to these increased commercial activities in the Indian ocean, there emerged in the coastal belt of South Western India and Sri Lanka, settlements of Muslim traders who by reason of their long stay, intermarried with the local families.

As far as we are able to ascertain, merchants normally did not take their wives while travelling to the countries of the Indian ocean. Since it was customary to remain in the East for several seasons, long years of separation ensued, and sometimes, tensions resulted which are reflected in the documents known as Geniza letters.[3]

Sulaiman Nadvi, an eminent scholar and historian, refers to the existence of a number of such settlements in South India long before the Muslim conquest of North India.[4] The existence of such settlements in Sri Lanka during the first century of Islam itself is also confirmed by the incident narrated by Al-Baladhuri in his book entitled "Futuh-ul-Buldan."[5] According to Al-Baladhuri, the king of Ceylon sent to Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf, the Viceroy of Iraq, some Muslim women whose fathers had been merchants having died, but their ships were attacked by some pirates near Daybal. One of the captured women of the tribe of Banu Yerbu cried out "O! Hajjaj come to my help." When this news reached Hajjaj, he sent a message to Rai Dahir, the ruler of Hind, demanding the immediate release of the captives. Since he did not respond to the request of Hajjaj, there commenced a series of raids against his kingdom, which ultimately led to the conquest of Sind in 715 A.D.

The political ascendancy of the Abbasides during the 9th and 10th centuries coincides with the Polonnaruwa period of Sri Lankan history. The patronage extended by the Abbasides to Arab trading activities enabled them to dominate the Indian ocean trade and to establish Persian

Gulf as a main centre of their commercial activities. It is also significant to observe here that the heyday of the Abbaside dynasty was contemperaneous with the zenith of what Arasaratnam calls "The classical age of Sinhalese power."[6] Muslims in Sri Lanka gradually assumed a significant position in respect of the island's trade and during the Polonnaruwa period became a powerful factor in the island's international trade. As foreign trade grew in importance, the Arab Muslims appear to have settled in large numbers in the coastal areas from where they in course of time moved into the interior. Mostly the settlements seem to have developed in the vicinity of lagoons which the Arabs called "Ghulb." The Arab settlements increased over the centuries mainly due to the conciliatory attitude and the spirit of toleration adopted by the local Sinhalese rulers towards the Muslims and the religion of Islam.

During this period, i.e., 9th and 10th centuries, we also observe increased references to Sri Lanka in Arab chronicles especially in the works of those Arab seafarers who had visited Sri Lanka either seeking adventure or with the idea of visiting Adam's Peak. Sulaiman Tajir visited Sri Lanka in 850 A.D. and his impressions are incorporated in 'Silsilat-ul-Tawarikh' of Abu Zaid As-Sirafi who visited Sri Lanka in 900 A.D. Al-Masudi visited Sri Lanka around 930 A.D. and gives a vivid description about the geography and manners and customs of the people of Sri Lanka in his famous work "Muruj-ud-Dhahab." Though the Arab geographers of this period such as Al-Isthakri (d 950 A.D.) Ibn Hawqal (977 A.D.) and Al-Maqdisi (985 A.D.) did not visit Sri Lanka, they had obtained valuable information about Sri Lanka from other Arab travellers and sailors which they incorporated in their works. A study of the first-hand information of the Arab travellers who had visited Sri Lanka and the observations made by the Arab geographers of the period reveal the tremendous commercial activities[7] of the Arabs in Sri Lanka during this period, and with the growth and prosperity of the Arab trade, the Arab settlements too witnessed a corresponding growth, and thus the spread of Islam in Sri Lanka was really speaking, the product of a gradual extension of Arab trade activities. Though these settlements were generally called Arab settlements, they were a conglomeration of the Persians, Arabs and Abyssinians, all Islamised and speaking the Arabic language.[8] The religion of Islam and the Arabic language were the factors that distinguished them as a distinct cultural entity.

Arabic has evolved considerably since the 7th century when the Muslims set out to build a vast empire which soon stretched from the Indus river

in the East to the Atlantic ocean in the West and from the Arabian sea in the South to the confines of Turkey and the Caucasias in the North. From humble beginnings, Arabic evolved as a literary language in the Muslim world, and with the rise and cultivation of the so-called "Arabic and foreign sciences" in the 9th and 10th centuries which were accompanied by an enormous literary output, the language acquired a universal character.[9]

The Arab traders who came mainly from the Persian Gulf region to Sri Lanka and other countries in the Indian ocean region brought with them the religion of Islam and the Arabic language, because the Muslims in their areas (Persian Gulf) must have naturally used Arabic as an instrument of intellectual expression and thus religiously and linguistically they represented Islam and Arabic.

We find from the notices of the Arab travellers and writers of the 9th and 10th centuries that Arabic was spoken in Sind.[10] Therefore, we may assume that the Muslims of Sri Lanka too at that time, who were mainly from Arab origin, must have spoken Arabic, which would have helped them a great deal in their dealings with the Muslim world, especially with Baghdad, with which, they seem to have had close cultural contact during this period.

As stated above, the religion of Islam, and the Arabic language, function as an integral part of the religious and cultural fabric of the Muslim society. On this basis, we may surmise some aspects of the Muslim social organization in Sri Lanka during this period. The Muslims who had by this time settled in fairly large numbers, must have naturally ensured various means for the performance of their day to day religious practices. We may assume that the mosque, which is the pivotal point in any Muslim social organization,[11] must have found a central place with adequate facilities for the teaching of Quran in all the Muslim settlements. We are unable to form an opinion about the nature of mosque organization in the Muslim social structure of this period as no mosque dating from this period had survived.[12] But we may assume that in accordance with the universal Islamic traditions, the "Kuttab" or Quran school, where the children were taught the recitation of the Quran, and the fundamentals of Islam, must have existed attached to the mosque or within the precincts of the mosque.

Muslims of Sri Lanka, during this period, seem to have had a very strong cultural link with Baghdad, the capital of the Abbaside Empire. There is a

tradition to the effect that the Abbaside Caliph of Baghdad had sent a religious teacher named Khalid Bin Abu Bakaya to Sri Lanka about 300 A.H./940 A.D. in response to a request by Sri Lankan Muslims for a religious teacher. He is stated to have died in Sri Lanka in 317 A.H./929 A.D., and the Caliph had sent a stone inserted in Arabic giving particulars about this teacher and it was placed in the grave of the Muslim community in Colombo. The cemetery having been abandoned the stone had been taken away by an official and placed at the entrance to his house as a stepping stone. Sir Alexander Johnstone got the history of the stone from Baghdad reported upon by government officials. He sent an ink impression of the Arabic script to England, and the Arabic was deciphered, and a translation obtained from Sir Samuel Lee, Professor of Arabic, University of Cambridge.[13]

A religious teacher who was sent to Sri Lanka by the Caliph of Baghdad at the request of the Muslims of Sri Lanka, shows the relationship that existed between the Muslims of Sri Lanka and Baghdad. Moreover, Khatib Baghdadi refers to a scholar by the name Abdur Rahman Bin Hatim Musa as-Sailani who was seen in Baghdad in 264/877 A.D.[14] As-Sailani refers to Ceylon and this scholar must have got this "nisba" due to his long stay in Ceylon, in keeping with the Arab practice of assigning "nisba."

Under the Abbasides, their capital Baghdad witnessed an unparalelled economic prosperity and also intellectual awakening that culminated under the patronage of Abbasid Caliph Mamun (813 A.D.). In three-quarters of a century, after the establishment of Baghdad, the Arabic reading world was in possession of the chief philosophical works of Aristotle, most of the medical writings of Galen as well as Persian and Indian scientific works. The epoch of translation was followed by one of creative activity. In medicine, philosophy and science, independent works were compiled. Ar-Razi (865–965 A.D.) who is known as Rhazes in the West and Ali Ibn Sina (980 – 1037 A.D.) popularly known as Avicenna were the most illustrious names in Arabic annals.[15]

The Muslims of Sri Lanka, during this period, seem to have been familiar with these works due to the close relationship they had with the Abbaside Caliphate, and the Muslim world. They must also have been proficient in Arabic to the extent of understanding these works. Alexander Johnstone refers to the wide knowledge of medicine and philosophy of the Moorish physicians of his time in his despatch to the Secretary of State and comments as follows:

"One of the principal works on medicine which they introduced into Ceylon was the works of Avicenna. They also introduced Arabic translations of Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, Galen and Ptolemy, extracts of which were frequently brought to me while I was in Ceylon by the Muhammadan priests and merchants who stated that the works themselves had originally been procured from Baghdad by their ancestors and remained for hundreds of years on their respective families."[16]

After the 10th century, with the disintegration of the Abbaside Empire, the political unity of the Muslim world was broken, and there came into being, sundry dynasties both in the Eastern and Western parts of the Muslim world.

With the decline of Baghdad as the Abbaside capital, Egypt and Persia came into prominence as centres of political power, and consequently, the centre of Islamic culture and civilization shifted from Baghdad to Cairo. Fatimid Caliphs of Egypt endeavoured to take the India trade out of the hands of their Iraqian rivals, the Abbaside Caliphs of Baghdad. During this period, there appears to have existed flourishing trade relationship between Red Sea ports and India, and between Egypt and the countries of the Indian ocean.[17] The documents known as Geniza papers indicate the nature of the India trade which stimulated international traffic and created close and fruitful links between the countries of Islam and the Far East. Egypt played a significant role in the India trade with the shifting of the centre of importance to Egypt. Aden, on the Red Sea, rose to become the leading commercial centre. It acquired the same reputation of Siraf and Oman. In the 12th century, the governor of Egypt, throttled the trade in the Persian Gulf by seizing its coasts, and Aden now became the port of par excellence controlling the trade with China, India and Indies.[18]

Though Cairo gained prominence first under the Fatimids and later under Mamlukes, Sri Lanka did not have close relationship with Cairo, apart from the misson despatched by Buvanakabahu I of Yappahuwa (1273–1284) to the Sultan of Egypt.[19]

As much as there was political instability in the Muslim world since the fall of Baghdad in 1258, A. D., Sri Lanka too encountered a period of political unrest after the middle of the 13th century. Though this had an adverse effect on the economy, the island's foreign trade grew in importance and Sri Lanka still continued to be an important strategic centre in the east-west trade of the period, and the Muslims still played a significant role in the country's external trade which was carried through

to the ports of west coast such as Kalpitiya, Puttalam, Chilaw, Negombo, Colombo, Kalutara, Beruwela and Galle.

With the increase in the importance of foreign trade, the Muslim settlements in the coastal areas especially around ports increased. The traders of this period seem to have occupied very influential positions even by functioning as advisers on foreign trade to Sinhalese kings, and the above-mentioned mission to Egypt is stated to have been executed with the help of the Arabs living in Sri Lanka.[20]

Though there existed no strong cultural bond between the Muslims of Sri Lanka and Egypt during this period, the countries of the Red Sea port area such as Yemen, Aden and Hadramauth seem to have begun to have some impact on the cultural life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka during this period. This impact grew rapidly and became a dominant factor in the religious and cultural life of the Muslims in the succeeding centuries.

The fall of Baghdad, and the subsequent failure to establish a strong cultural link with Egypt, would have rendered the Muslims of Sri Lanka, culturally isolated from the mainstream of the Muslim world. But this danger was averted due to the growth of Muslim commercial activities along the Mabar coast[21] during this period. Consequently, the Muslims of Sri Lanka were drawn closer to the Muslim community of Mabar coast, and also to some extent, to the Malabar area.

The Arabs had established trade colonies in the Mabar area and Malabar coasts from the very early times. In Mabar, the principal settlement was Kayalpattanam on the Tirinelvelli district, near the mouth of Tamparapa-rani where Caldwell had discovered a number of Arab coins bearing dates from the 7th century to the 13th century.[22] The commercial relationship between South Eastern (Mabar) and South Western (Malabar) in India, and between the Muslim world, appears to have grown considerably during the late 13th, 14th and early 15th centuries. During this period, a group of merchants known as Karamis[23] seem to have monopolised the trade with India, East Africa, and the Far East. In a letter sent from Mabar to Cairo, a man informs his wife that he was sending her several items of oriental spices and fruits among them, seven and a half Mann of Jawza (nutmeg), the like of which is not to be had in the Karam.[24] This shows Karamis were renowned for high standard of wares. In the same manner as Mabar, Malabar on the south western side of India too witnessed a steady extension of Muslim influence and commercial activity. Its port Cranganore, which was known as Muziris to Herodotus, was a prosperous commercial centre from the very early times and became a regular port

of call for Arabs and attracted merchants from Yemen and Hadramauth during this period. They were supposed to be the precursors of the Muslims of Malayalam coasts known as Mapillas.[25]

Due to this increased trade activity in the Mabar area, mainly with Yemen, Hadramauth, and Aden, a thriving Muslim community developed in the east in the Coromondal coast (Mabar) of India and steadily found their way in considerable numbers to Sri Lanka where they intermarried with the local Muslims. The Muslims of Sri Lanka, during this period, came to rely largely for their contact with the Muslim world on Mabar. This had a very deep impact and influence on the culture of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. As a result of increasing contacts, commercial and cultural, with the Muslims of Mabar, a new element, South Indian one was added into the composition of the Muslim (Arab) society of Sri Lanka which lost its exclusively Arab character. Thus they became Indo-Arab in ethnic character rather than purely Arab.[26] The memory of a new wave of immigration that occurred due to the outburst of 'Muslim commercial activity in the Coromondal coast is preserved in the tradition centering around the medieval port of "Kayal" as the ancestral home of Sri Lankan Muslims.

Thus there ensued a cordial and friendly relationship between Muslims of Sri Lanka and the Muslims of South India during this period. There is a common belief that during this period, a large number of Muslims from Kayalpattanam came and settled down in Beruwela, and R. L. Brohier is of the opinion that Kechimale mosque on the seacoast of Beruwela was built by the descendants of those who came and settled down in Kechimale Harbour in 1024 A.D.[27]

On the whole Beruwela seems to have risen to prominence as an important Muslim settlement during this period, and we find increasing references to Beruwela in Sri Lanka, and Kayal in South India in the historical and literary works.[28] The Sri Lanka Sandesa poems of the 14th and 15th centuries such as Tisara Sandesaya and Gira Sandesaya compiled during the period of Parakramabahu (1440 – 1450) refer to the commercial prosperity of Beruwela.[29]

One of the main cultural consequences of this relationship that existed between the Muslims of Sri Lanka and Muslims of Mabar was the emergence of Arabic Tamil as a common language form among them.

The Tamil language was the medium of South Indian commerce during this period. This is borne out by the impact the Tamil language had on the

commercial vocabulary of the time. The names by which one of the Indian ship-owners was referred to in Geniza papers was PTN Swmy. Some scholars are of the opinion that this may be the corrupt form of the Tamil word, the Pattana Swami, the head of a large merchants guild.[30] Reference has been already made to the role played by the Karami merchants in the India trade with Aden and Egypt. Dr. A. L. Basham of the University of London is of the opinion that as there is no suitable word in Arabic carrying the meaning connected with the activities of the Karami merchants, the word Karim is derived from the Tamil word 'Karyam' which among other things mean 'business affair.' As business with the Middle East was the main concern, a body of shipowners and traders engaged in it should have been known or perhaps even called itself by that designation.[31] All these factors indicate the dominance of the Tamil language in the India trade of the period.

The commercial and cultural contact that existed between the Muslims of Sri Lanka and Mabar in course of time made them to lose their exclusive Arab character, and Tamill language too made its impact in their social and cultural life to the extent of becoming their medium of expression in all aspects of their life. But the Tamil, as spoken and written by them, assumed a peculiar pattern and shape in respect of the script and the vocabulary which was generally known as 'Arabic Tamil.'

But in order to understand fully the genesis and growth of this language form which was the admixture of Arabic and Tamil, we must have a background knowledge of the role played by the Arabic language in the religious and cultural life of the Muslims in general. Being the language of the Quran, and the language of religious devotion, Muslims attached a sense of sacredness to the Arabic language and its script. Arabic as we know belongs to the Semitic group of languages. Although, Arabic did not establish deep roots in areas of Muslim Empire which lack semitic-linguistic background such as Iran, Afghanistan and India, it has exerted a tremendous influence on the local languages and literature of these and other countries.[32] Persian was written in Arabic script and Turkish before the linguistic reform of 1920 was also written in Arabic script. After the conquest of Sind in the areas like Daybal, Mansura, and Multan, Arabic and Sindhi were spoken. According to Al-Beruni, Sindhi was written in some areas in Malawi, and while in some other parts, it was written in Andhanagari script. But as the population became Muslims, the old script gave way to the language of the Quran. The oldest form of Arabicized Sindhi scripts is to be found in the couplets of Shah Karimi of Bulri (1537–1623 A. D.). The fifty two sounds in Sindhi are represented by the thirty

letters of Arabic,[33] and also it contained proportion of Arabic words mutilated or intact.[34] During Muslim rule, important Bengali works were written in Arabic script.[35] In the same manner, in South India, Malayalam, which was spoken in the south western coast of India, and Tamil, which was the language of Coromandal coast, or South Eastern India, began to be written in Arabic with suitable modification in its letters agreeing with the Tamil phonetics. This new script, and the language form which had a large admixture of Arabic words, was known as 'Arabic Tamil.' This distinctive language style was in usage among the Muslims of Sri Lanka in the medieval times is indicated by the 15th century Portuguese Captain Odorado Barbosa's description of their language.[36] In a way, Arabic Tamil may be compared to 'Manipravalam' style of Malayalam language. In Malayalam, due to Sanskrit influence, a special literary dialect arose containing a large admixture of Sanskrit and likened in its new name 'Manipravalam' to a necklace string with pearls and corals.[37]

But Arabic Tamil has much more similarities with the Swahili language of East Africa than it has with Manipravalam. Apart from the language, the cultural patterns of both the Muslims of Sri Lanka, and the Swahili culture, have many things in common.

"Swahili" is a word derived from the Arabic word "Swahil" (Plural of Sahil), a name used from the earliest times by the Arab writers to denote the east coast of Africa. But it is not clear when it was first applied to the people who are usually called "Zandj."[38] But generally speaking, Swahili is a generic name for the inhabitants of east west of Africa, and the island of Zanzibar. These inhabitants were the descendants of the Arab traders who had established settlements along the coast in places such as Magdishu, Merka, Lamu, Malindi and Mombasa and maintained commercial relations with the Persian Gulf, India and beyond.[39] They are really speaking, descendants of Bantu Negroes and Arab traders, and thus, they are of Bantu stock with an Arab infusion, the emergence of a racial pattern similar to South Indian and Sri Lankan Muslims. Their language "Kiswahili" or Swahili is essentially African and Bantu in structure, as Arabic Tamil is essentially Indian and Dravidian in structure. Both are written in Arabic scripts with suitable modifications for phonetical variations. Since all Swahili syllabus are open, the pronunciation of Arabic words has been naturally modified by the introduction of vowels between two consonants. Therefore, in Swahili, the Arabic word Rizk became Rizki and Sahn as Sahni whereas in Arabic Tamil, it assumes the form of 'Rizku' and 'Sahan'. To denote some phonetical sounds that are not available, use of "Nuqta" (diacritical points or Dots) is common to both Swahili and

Arabic Tamil and also the Persian letter پ is used in both denoting P, a sound which is not found in Arabic. Of the foreign elements in Swahili vocabulary, Arabic is obviously the most conspicuous, many theological terms such as 'Dua,' 'Khutba' 'Mawt' and 'Hawayat' are common to both Swahili, and Arabic Tamil.(40)

One could also observe similar cultural patterns between the Swahili culture and the culture of the Tamil-speaking Muslims of South India and Sri Lanka. Influence of the Islamic cultural traditions of Hadramauth is common to both cultures. In respect of Swahili culture, there were streams of immigrants from Hadramauth who introduced their local customs especially Hadrami tradition of Islamic learning based on Shafi school of Thought adhering to the beliefs and doctrines of "Ahl-us-Sunna." Thus Swahili culture was overwhelmingly influenced by the Islamic culture of Hadramauth.(41)

The Sufis from Yemen and Hadramauth had played a significant role in the religious and cultural life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the trade contact with the Persian Gulf region, especially with Yemen and Hadramauth, as already discussed, also was a contributory factor in the dissemination of Hadrami culture in Sri Lanka. But the nature and extent of this impact is yet to be studied.

The common adherence of the Muslims of Southern Arabia (Yemen, and Hadramauth), Muslims of South Western coast (Malayalam) and South Eastern coast (Mabar) of India, and the Muslims of Sri Lanka, to the Shafi School of Thought, and their belonging to the beliefs of Ahl-us-Sunna with the marked and pronounced absence of the Shia School of Thought, indicate the fact that all these areas are bound by one common cultural belt.

Some similarities also could be observed between Swahili literature and Arabic Tamil literature. Mr. A. M. A. Azeez in his Tamil work "East African Scenes" refers to a Swahili work entitled "Uthandi Wam Wana Kibona" (advice of Kibona to a familied woman). The title and the content of which has many similarities with an Arabic Tamil composition "Penputhy Malai" (advice to woman), a work which is extremely popular among the Muslims of South India and Sri Lanka.(42)

This cultural affinity between the Muslims of this one common cultural belt may be attributed to various geographical and historical factors. Geographically, East Africa, Sri Lanka, and India, border two sides of the Indian ocean, which naturally led to constant intercourse among these

countries. There is also a traditional belief to the effect that during the Caliphate Umayyad, Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan, there came a large number of Arabs and settled down in the East African coast, and in the period of the same caliph, it is said that some Arabs belonging to the Hashimite clan came and settled down in Sri Lanka. These and other historical factors also must have contributed towards the common cultural pattern in some aspects of the social, religious and cultural traditions of the Muslims of this area.

The belief (Aqeeda) and the law (Sharia) are two important factors that act as binding forces of Muslim social structure. It has been already noted that in respect of belief, Muslims of Sri Lanka belong to the school of Ahl-us-Sunna, and in the field of law, they are followers of Shafi School of Thought. This is mainly due to the fact that the Arabs who came from the maritime states of Aden, Yemen, and Hadramauth, for purpose of trade in Southern India, Sri Lanka, and South East Asia were under the strong influence of Shafi School of Thought, because, when Yemen was conquered by the Ayyubids in the latter part of 12th century, Shafi school assumed absolute prominence in Southern Arabia which had close trade links with Southern India and Sri Lanka during this period.

Another significant feature of the religious life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka was the dominant influence of the mystical philosophy of Islam which is known as Tasawuf. This is true not only in respect of Sri Lanka but also of India, and other South East Asian Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. The Sufis, as much as the traders, had played a significant role in the spread of Islam in South and South East Asia. In order to understand the nature and extent of the Sufi thought, and Sufi orders in the religious life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka, it is important to have a background knowledge of the spread of the Sufi movement in India.

In the historical, literary and religious documents of the latter part of 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, one comes across increasing reference to Sufis and the influence they exerted on the life and thought of the Muslims.

The 13th century is regarded as an important period for two significant developments in the history of Islam. Firstly, it was in this century, the Muslim world suffered a severe shock and setback due to the Mongol invasion under Halagu Khan in 1258 A.D. The Mongols destroyed the centres of Muslim political power and ravaged and pillaged the Muslim cities depriving the Muslims of all their cultural possessions built over the cen-

turies. It became virtually impossible to predict how long the Muslim world would take to recover from this shock and regain their glory. Secondly, as a result of this great catastrophe, a great movement emerged among the Muslims to resurrect the glory of Islam and to rehabilitate its lost image through propagation. Thus the missionary spirit of Islam was revitalized involving travels to many distant lands. This task was mainly performed by the Sufis. We witness a great upsurge of the Sufi movement in the 13th century. Thus Sufis fired by their missionary zeal penetrated into areas where ordinary travellers would not venture and thus the 13th and 14th centuries witnessed tremendous Sufi activities in Northern India, South and South East Asia. The Sufi activity in Bengal and East of South East Asia had begun as early as the 13th century. The Sufis and Sufi orders centred around "Khanqas," "Takkis" and "Zawiyas"[43] played a significant role not only in the propagation of Islam but also in the extension and diffusion of Muslim commerce. Ibn Batuta's narrations show how important these institutions were in the expansion of Muslim commerce and in the spread of Islam.[44]

Ibn Batuta who visited Sri Lanka in 1344 mentions about some of the Sufis who had visited Sri Lanka. He speaks of Sheikh Abdullah ibn Khafif, a Persian Sufi, who according to him, was the first to open up the pilgrim path between the jungle of "Salawath" (Chilaw) and Kunakar (Kurunegala). He also mentions another Sufi called Sheikh Uthman Ash-Shirazi, whose title Shirazi indicates his Persian origin. The travels of Ibn Batuta show some Sufi activity in Sri Lanka, but during this period, we have no record of any Sufi order (Tariqa) existing in Sri Lanka. The Sufi Tariqas, really speaking, were introduced into Sri Lanka after the Portuguese period.

Before we come to the spread of Sufi orders in Sri Lanka, it is relevant here to assess the impact of the Portuguese invasion of Sri Lanka in 1505 had on the social and cultural life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

When the Portuguese landed in Colombo in 1505, the Muslims were virtually in monopoly of the island's external trade and the near monopoly of its internal trade. The Muslims were regarded by them as their rivals in trade and formidable enemies in faith and thus they determined to destroy the political and commercial power of the Muslims, and there commenced, an era of Muslim persecution by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch. Added to this, the European discovery of the sea route to India via the Cape of Good Hope led to the decline in Muslim commercial supremacy on the Indian ocean. This resulted in the further isolation of Mus-

lims from the mainstream of the Muslim world, and from there onwards, they began to depend heavily on Mabar for cultural inspiration. The cultural isolation of the Muslims from the Muslim world, and their total dependance on Mabar for their religious and cultural needs were responsible for some important cultural implications.

By this, the Muslims of Sri Lanka, stood completely unaffected by the various developments that were taking place in the world of Islam, so much so, that the happenings in the neighbouring North Indian Muslim society did not have any impact on them. At the beginning of the 18th century when the Indian Muslim society was in a state of decadence due to the disintegration of the Moghul empire after the death of Aurangzab, the religio-intellectual leadership of Muslim India passed for the time into the hands of a theologian in the person of Shah Waliullah whose aim was to reach the erudite Muslim public throughout the Muslim world. He founded a tradition of religious scholarship, and a school, which was to influence the religious thought in Muslim India for the next three centuries. But the impact of his teachings was neither felt in South India nor in Sri Lanka. In the same manner, the Egyptian thinker Sheikh Muhammad Abduh who made a substantial contribution to modern Muslim thought did not create any impact on this region. But both Waliullah, and Abduh exerted their influence on Indonesia and Malaysia. The father of Malay Muslim Renaissance Seyyed Sheikh al-Haj (d. 1867) met Sheikh Abduh and was inspired by his thoughts.

In spite of this isolation from the Muslim world, and a continuous exposure to Christian proselytisation under the Portuguese and the Dutch, the strong bases of their faith (Aqida) binding force of the Islamic sharia, social organization centred around the nucleus of the mosque-maktab structure and the constant cultural interchanges they had with the Muslims of South India, enabled the Muslims of Sri Lanka to preserve their cultural identity and survive as an independent ethnic entity.

It is rather difficult to reconstruct the cultural history of the Muslims of this period due to the paucity of materials and such other factors. But one may assume that during this period, Muslims must have lived in a state of fear and tension, in clusters, centred around the mosques, because in any Muslim social set-up, masjid or mosque forms the nucleus around which the Muslim social organization is built up. Thus inspite of difficulties, political and economic experience by the Muslims, the socio-religious organization centred on the Jumma mosques though without any central direction or elaborate rules of procedure was kept intact. This was made

possible on account of the strong religious consciousness and piety of the local Muslims, and the role played by the religious scholars who wielded a great influence on the Muslim society and thus the integrity of the Muslims preserved.[45]

With the arrival of the British, the Muslims began to emerge gradually from the degradeful, ignoble and sordid state in which they were under the Portuguese and the Dutch. Under the British, the Muslims found themselves, on the whole, in a much better position than they had been under the Dutch, because, the trade policy of the British was less unfavourable to them than that of the Dutch. They were now able to pursue their internal trade and as well as foreign trade which now centred mainly between the ports of Sri Lanka and the ports of South India without any hindrance or impediment. The cultural contacts between the Muslims of Sri Lanka and Muslims of South India assumed a new proportion and a new dimension.

An interesting feature of the religious and cultural life of the Muslims of this period was the spread of the Sufi Tariqas, and a powerful impact of the Sufi thought in Sri Lanka Muslim society. The Sufi Tariqas such as Qadiriyya, Shadhliyya, Rifaiyya, Chisthiyya, and Naqshabandiya were introduced into Sri Lanka by the Muslims of South India.

The Qadiriya Tariqa founded in Iraq by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077–1166 A.D.) was introduced into India by Muhammad Ghawth (d 1482 A.D.). It was however established in India much later and rose to prominence in early 17th century.[46] This Tariqa seems to spread onto Mabar area from Kerala in South India. Sheikh Muhammad al-Jiffry, a great Sufi scholar of Hadramauth, was greatly responsible for the spread of Qadiriya Tariqa in Kerala. He came to Calicut in 1159/1746 from Tareem in Hadramauth and settled down in Calicut. He was a great scholar of Arabic, and an eminent Sufi, and an author of many treatises on Sufis. He is also a founder of Alaviyatul Qadriya Tariqa which has many adherents in Sri Lanka. Sheikh Abdul Qadir Thaika Sahib was born in 1191/1777 at Kayalpattanam and was admitted into the Qadriya order by Sheikh Jiffry. This indicates how this order spread from Malabar to Mabar area.[47]

The Qadriya order was introduced into Sri Lanka by a number of South Indian Sufis such as Sheikh Omar Thaika Sahib of Kayalpattanam (d 1875 A.D.), Sheikh Abdul Qadir Thaika Sahib of Keelakarai (1850 A.D.) and Sheikh Sayyid Muhammad Ibn Ahamad Lebbai popularly known as Mapillai Alim. These Sufi scholars also had compiled a number of scholarly works on Islamic Theology, Law and Mysticism in Arabic and Arabic

Tamil. These works exerted a powerful influence in shaping the religious thought and life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

Another very influential Tariqa in Sri Lanka is the Shadhli order which owed its inspiration to a Sufi scholar of Maghrib, Abul Hasan Ash Shadhili (1196–1258 A.D.) whose way called Shadhliya became the most important in North Africa from Morocco to Egypt and also gained a following in Syria and Arabia.[48] It is not clear when this order was introduced into India but there are evidences to the effect that this order had its impact on the South Indian Muslim society during the middle of the 19th century. During this period, many biographies were compiled by South Indian scholars on Ash Shadhili in Arabic Tamil. Nuh Lebbai Alim of Kayalpattanam (1299/1881) compiled an Arabic Tamil biography entitled "Nafahatul Anbar Fi Manaqibi Qutb al Akbar," another scholar Muhammad Ismail (1311/1893) of Nagapattanam compiled a biography on the sheikh entitled "Hidayat-us-Salikin." The Shadhiliya order spread into Sri Lanka during the same period in which it spread in South India. The Chistiya, and Naqshabandiya were other important Sufi Tariqas that found adherents among the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

Apart from the Sufi orders that were introduced into Sri Lanka from India, the Sufis from Yemen and Hadramauth, came to Sri Lanka during this period and contributed immensely towards the religious and cultural life of the Muslims. Muslims of Sri Lanka, during this period, seem to have had a very close cultural link with Yemen and Hadramauth during the period under review. Sheikh Ismail Izzaddin Yemani, popularly known as Arabi Appa, visited Sri Lanka, and through his popular religious discourses, and spiritual assemblies, created a religious reawakening. His son Sheikh Yehya al-Yemani continued his father's tradition and became famous not only as a popular preacher, but also as a renowned calligraphist. His handwritten Quran is still being preserved in the Matara Jumma mosque. Ash Sheikh Abdullah ibn Umar Badheeb al Yemani, another eminent Sufi and scholar from Yemen arrived in Sri Lanka in 1840, and after a short stay, returned to Yemen. He arrived in Sri Lanka again in 1858 and died in 1892. His activities were mainly confined to the central province, having his centre, the village of Madulbowa in Hemmathagama. He fought vehemently against the distorted ideas and wrongful practices that had crept into the Muslim society in the name of Islam. His book entitled "Sailul Warid" was mainly directed against these unIslamic practices.

Seyyed Abdul Rahman Abdul Bari al-Ahdal was another important figure from Yemen who made a substantial contribution towards the religious

life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. He was a descendant of Seyyed Omar al-Ahdal, the founder of the Ahadaliya order from Marwa in Yemen. He introduced the Ahadaliya order into Sri Lanka, and also initiated the practice of having an annual gathering for the recitation of Sahih al-Bukhari at Beruwela.[49]

Some of the Sufi sheikhs who belonged to the Sakkaf branch of Ba Alawi introduced the Aidarusiya and Haddadiyya orders in Sri Lanka. Aiydrusiya Tariqa of Tarim in Hadramauth founded by Abu Bakr Ibn Allah al-Aidarus (d 914/1509 A.D.) spread through the movement of members of his family into India, Indonesia, East African coast.[50] The Haddadiya order was founded by Abdullah ibn Alavi al-Haddad (1720 A.D.) who was from Tarim in Hadramauth. He was the spiritual mentor of Sheikh Al-Jiffry, the founder of the Alaviyatul Qadriya order which has many adherents in Sri Lanka. The litanies known as Ratib of Abdullah ibn Alavi al-Haddad, and Abdullah al-Aidarus are still popular in Sri Lanka, and are recited on Friday nights.

The Sufi orders occupied an important place in the Sri Lankan Muslim society during this period. Each Sufi Tariqa had its own religious centres known as "Zaviyas" or "Takkiyas" which functioned as centres of religious learning and spiritual training. Masjid or the mosque in Muslim society functioned mainly as a centre of religious worship where daily prayers are conducted, whereas Zaviyas and Takkiyas served as centres for each Sufi Tariqa for the voluntary devotional activities prescribed by each Tariqa. The Sufi Tariqas prescribe "wird" to be recited by the disciples on certain prescribed days and times. Among the Muslims of[51] Sri Lanka Ash-Shadhli's "Hizbul Bahr" and Al-Jazuli's "Dalail-ul-Khairat" are popular.[52]

The Sufi Tariqas had great social significance on the Sri Lankan Muslim society and made a valuable contribution to the intellectual life of the community. The works of great Muslim Sufis such as Al Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, Abdul Karim Jili and other works on Muslim theology and Islamic jurisprudence were introduced into Sri Lanka mainly by Sufi scholars of South India, Yemen, and Hadramauth. The Muslims of South India, during this period, were very intimately familiar with the works of illustrious scholars who flourished in the Islamic world during the medieval period. The works of Al-Ghazali such as "Bidayatul Hidaya," "Mirajul Arifin" were translated into Tamil by Seyyed Ahmed Alim of Keelakarai in 1298/1880. Nuh Lebbe Alim of Kayalpattanam translated Ratib al-Haddad of Abdullah Alavi al-Haddad. Sheikh Abdul Qadir Alim's handwritten manuscripts of Abdul Karim Jilis 'Insan Kamil' and Ibn Arabi's 'Fusus al-Hikm' are still

preserved in the mosque at Kayalpattanam.[53] Most of these scholarly works of great Muslim thinkers of the medieval period were introduced into Sri Lanka mainly by South Indian scholars who frequently visited Sri Lanka during this period.

One of the eminent scholars of Sri Lanka, and the first translator of the Quran into Arabic Tamil, Sheikh Mustafa received Sheikh Umar (1801–1945), another renowned scholar of Kayalpattanam, at Beruwela, and became a disciple of him. Sheikh Mustafa was the first scholar to translate the Quran into Arabic Tamil under the title "Fathhur-Rahman Fi Tarjamati Tafsir al-Quran." This was published in five volumes in 1291/1874.[53] Ash Sheikh Mohammad Alim Sahib, popularly known as Kasawatte Alim (1898 A.D.) was another great scholar of Sri Lanka. He was also a disciple of Thaika Sahib of Kayalpattanam. He was a great scholar of Arabic and had composed[54] a number of odes and elegies in Arabic. Seyyed Muhammad Mapillai Alim (1316/1898) of Keelakari was a great Sufi scholar and a literary figure who had made an immense contribution to the religious and cultural awakening of the Muslims of Sri Lanka during this period. He came to Sri Lanka in 1835 in connection with his business but when he observed the backwardness of the Muslims, he devoted all his time to work for the religious awakening of the Muslim community. He established a number of mosques in Colombo and other main cities such as Galle, Weligama, Matara, Hambantota and other distant villages. His compendium on Islamic law and theology in Arabic Tamil such as "Maghani," "Fathud Dayyan" became the main source book for the Muslims to know their religious practices in a language which they understood. He also established the first Arabic madrasa in Weligama in 1884. This madrasa, which was popularly known as Bukhari madrasa, was the first of its kind in Sri Lanka, and he established on the model of Madrasatul Aroosiya, which he had already established in Keelakari.[55] When he knew that the common masses were unable to understand the Friday sermon that was delivered in the mosques in Arabic, he translated the "Khutbas" of Ibn Nabata into Arabic Tamil to be read in the mosques on Fridays.[56] This was the period that witnessed great reawakening on the part of all the communities of Sri Lanka. While in the Buddhist community, Colonel Olcott and Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayake Thero were working for the religious and cultural awakening of the Buddhists, Arumuga Navalar (1822–1879) by his inspiring sermons, and polemical writings, and by founding educational institutions, was playing a significant role in the Tamil renaissance and Saivite reformation, the Muslim community did not remain unaffected by these developments that were taking place, in the national life of the country. The Muslim community too responded to the challenges imposed by the foreign rule. The Muslim community,

during this period, witnessed the emergence of leaders like Siddi Lebbe who was a profound thinker, writer, educationist and reformer. Siddi Lebbe, who was born on 11th June 1838, was a proctor by profession, following in the footsteps of his father M. L. Siddi Lebbe, who is considered to be the first Muslim Proctor of Sri Lanka. Siddi Lebbe, who with his instinctively keen insight and intellectual background was able to observe the changes that were taking place around him, and this led to his realization of the fact that the salvation of his community lay in education. He felt that his ideas could be better propagated by founding a paper that would function as an organ to disseminate his ideas for social reform. For this purpose, he began on December 21, 1882, an Arabic Tamil weekly "Muslim Nesan." This paper appeared from 1882–1887. This paper primarily aimed at educating the Muslim community on matters of importance, and familiarizing them with the current happenings in the Muslim world in order to break their state of cultural isolation. 'Muslim Nesan' dealt mainly with the development in the Muslim world. Freedom movements of Egypt and Sudan, the spread of Wahhabism in Arabia, the political development and educational activities of the Muslims of neighbouring India, current events in North Africa, Pan Islam and its development in Turkey, all found ample coverage in 'Muslim Nesan.' Turkish Empire, and Sultan Abdul Hamid II of Turkey (1876–1909) found a prominent place among the subjects dealt[57] with. Thus the Muslims of Sri Lanka were kept in touch with the affairs of the Muslim world, which gave them a feeling that they belonged to the world fraternity of Muslim Umma. 'Muslim Nesan' also was concerned with the political, social and economic problems of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. Through this organ, Siddi Lebbe agitated vehemently for Muslim representation in the Legislative Council. Siddi Lebbe's main concern was the educational upliftment of his community. He, in the columns of his paper, and in his rousing public addresses, pleaded with the community to take up to education, the neglect of which he feared would cause a tremendous setback to his community. The arrival of Ahmad Orabi, the Egyptian exile, who was sent to Sri Lanka to serve a life term of banishment, was a great source of strength to the mission of Siddi Lebbe. Ahmad Orabi arrived in Sri Lanka in 1883. He spent in Sri Lanka nineteen years (1883–1901). When he arrived in Sri Lanka, he was given a rousing welcome by the Muslims of Sri Lanka, and Siddi Lebbe, who saw in Orabi, an inspiring companion for his activities, met him within twelve days of his arrival on 11th January 1883.

Orabi Pasha, who was already familiar with the educational reforms that were undertaken in Egypt, in the early years of the nineteenth century, extended his fullest co-operation and assistance to Siddi Lebbe, and contributed immensely towards the success of his cause for Muslim education.

The dream of Siddi Lebbe blossomed forth into reality, when on Monday, the 22nd of August 1892, Al-Madrasa at uz Zahira was founded with the active patronage of Ahmed Orabi al Misri, known as Arabi Pasha, and able assistance of Wapche Marikar, its first manager. The name al Madrasa at uz[58] Zahira itself was chosen by Orabi Pasha.

Siddi Lebbe also encouraged the Muslims to study Arabic, and emphasized the importance of learning it. With the objective of facilitating the study of Arabic, he wrote simple texts in Arabic Tamil such as "Hidayatul Qasimiya" and "Thuhfatun Nahw" on Arabic grammar.[59] He is also credited with the writing of the first Tamil novel in Sri Lanka. His novel "Story of Asan Be"[60] (1885) reflects the influence of Turkey and Egypt on the cultural life of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. The hero of this novel studies in Al-Azhar, a fact that indicates that the Muslims of Sri Lanka were conversant with the place occupied by Al-Azhar in the Muslim world; and also the educational development in the Muslim world. It is also interesting to observe that Siddi Lebbe, in his "Hidayatul Qasimiya," which is a book he wrote on Arabic grammar, says that in this work he was following the method of the text books prepared in Egypt for the teaching of Arabic.

Siddi Lebbe also wrote on philosophical subjects. The dominant role played by Sufism in the religious life and thought of Muslims of Sri Lanka has been already observed. Siddi Lebbe too came under the impact of Sufi thought, he seems to have had very close contact with the mystical writers of the time such as Mapillai Alim, and Kasawatte Alim. He wrote a mystical treatise entitled "Asrarul Alam"[61] (Mysteries of the world). This book was issued a few months before his death. This book created a very big uproar in certain circles because of some of the views expressed in it. This was mainly due to the fact that some of the theologians, who were not familiar with the mystical terminologies which carry some deep meaning, could not grasp what the author wanted to convey by certain terms.

In the chapter "Alam Khiyal" (Phantom World), he, while criticizing the theories of the atheists and agnostics, has sought to prove that of the force and matter in which the universe was classified by them: the former is the self-existent permanent reality and the latter is only its outward expression, and that the said reality is identical with what the Muslims regard as the essence of God.

Soon after the release of this book, there was a long drawn out controversy over the term "force", led by Mohammad Lebbe Marikkar, a native

doctor. Meanwhile, Siddi Lebbe died. Lebbe Marikkar published "Thathu-sangara Kandanam" (Destruction of the force of God). This criticism of some against the views expressed by Siddi Lebbe in "Asramul Alam" was met by I. L. M. Abdul Azeez, another eminent leader and scholar after the demise of Siddi Lebbe. The controversy now was not only confined to Sri Lanka but was extended beyond the shores of South India, which as already observed, had a close link with the Muslims of Sri Lanka. I. L. M. Abdul Azeez defended "Asrarul Alam." He published "Chattignanurtum" (The metaphysical meaning of force). He wrote three more pamphlets refuting their arguments with the same title. Mr. Azeez explained the fact that the opposition of some of the ulama were mainly due to the ignorance of sufistic explanation of the phenomenon of existence. This controversy lasted about five years, and ultimately "Asrarul Alam" found popular favour and acceptance.

During the time of Siddi Lebbe, Abdul Azeez was chosen by him to edit the "Muslim Nesan" in 1889. In a series of four editorials written by him under the title "Asrarul Alamum Alukkarulla Alimum," he controverted the views of the polemists who criticized "Asrarul Alam." Abdul Azeez was very much influenced by Orabi Pasha, and he also became an ardent admirer of Turkey, and Sultan Abdul Hamid who was considered at that time as the caliph of Islam. On 31st August 1900, he delivered a lecture on the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Sultan Abdul Hamid and reminded the audience of the recital of Sultan's name every Friday in all Jumma mosques.

Abdul Azeez was an able journalist, profound thinker and social reformer. In 1889, he assumed the editorship of 'Muslim Nesan.' After functioning as its editor for six months, he founded a paper known as "As Sawab" in Tamil, lithographed in Arabic characters, and later this was superseded by the 'Muslim Guardian,' which he started as a bi-weekly in 1901 and lasted till 1908. His aim in the publication of this paper was to educate the Muslim community on the need for education, to bring social transformation by weeding out unislamic practices prevalent among them, and to create in them, a sense of belonging to the Universal Umma of Islam by appraising them of the current affairs of the Muslim world. In the columns of this paper, he appealed for donation to Hajazi railway intended to connect Damascus with Medina. This created a powerful response. The Muslims watched with much interest the development of this project, and its completion was celebrated in Colombo with much enthusiasm. The 'Muslim Guardian' became so popular that some of its English articles were published in the leading newspapers of Colombo. He was deeply religious

and thus became a serious student of the Quran. He wrote a series of articles on the subject of teaching the Quran, and suggested that side by side with the Arabic Quran, its Tamil translation should be studied by Sri Lankan Muslims. In 1912, he paid a visit to Jaffna, and delivered a lecture after Jumma, and emphasized the need to deliver the Khutba (Friday sermon) in Tamil. Of the articles "Mohammedan Marriage Registration Ordinance" and the "Registration of Mohammedan Marriages and Divorce" were very interesting. At the request of Mr. E. B. Denham, Superintendent of Census, Abdul Azeez forwarded to him, a report on the Birth customs among the Moors'.[62] His magnum opus was his "Ethnology of Moors of Ceylon" that was published in 1907 in which he made the pioneering effort to reconstruct the history of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. In this work, he says :

"I have decided to leave to the future, the writing of a comprehensive history of my race, explaining its manners and customs, habits and trade, and to content myself for the present in writing the criticism."

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Geniza papers are collection of records written mostly in Arabic language. Albeit nearly exclusively with Hebrew characters. These Judae-Arabic documents are mostly of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. They had been originally preserved in the so-called Cairo Geniza and are dispersed at present in many libraries of Europe and the United States, Ibid, p. 329.

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14. S. A. Imam, Ceylon-Arab Relations, **Ibid,** p. 13.

15. Hitti, **History of Arabs,** London, 1964, p. 364.

16. Sir Alexander Johnston's footnotes to his Despatch to the Secretary of State dated 3rd February 1827.
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34. S. M. Ikram, **Muslim Civilization in India**, New York, 1964, p. 19.

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40. Art. "Swahili" in **Encyclopaedia of Islam** also cf A. M. A. Azeez, **Kilakkapirikka Karchikal** (Tamil), Colombo, p. 153.

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42. Azeez, **op. ct.** p. 153.

43. Khanqah, Zavia, Takkiya were institutions where the Sufi master (Shaykh) provides spiritual training to his disciples. A Khanqah normally consisted of central courtyard having cloisters along two sides within which were situated cells for the sufis. There was a common hall for devotional exercises. There was a central place when the sheikh reclines during ceremonies and reception. This was the general pattern of also zavias and takkiyas. Mostly, the term Khanqah is used to denote these sufi centres, in Central Asia, and India. In North Africa, the term Zavia is generally used, and Tekki or Takkiya were used in Iran and Turkey. For a detailed study of these institutions, see J. Spencer Trimingham, **The Sufi Orders in Islam**, Oxford, 1971. But it is interesting to observe that in Sri Lanka, the term "Zavia" denotes exclusively the centres of Shadhliya order whereas Takkiya is generally used to denote centres of all the Tariqas. It is also interesting to observe that the term 'Khanqah' which was so popular in North India is totally unknown in Sri Lanka and South India.

44. **Rihla Ibn Batuta** (Arabic) Cairo Edition, 1948, II, p. 109, 110.

45. A. M. A. Azeez, **Some aspects of the Muslim Society of Ceylon** with special reference to the **Eighteen Eighties** – Paper submitted to the First International Conference of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, 1966, p. 749.

46. Spencer, J. Tirmingham, **The Sufi orders,** op. ct. p. 84

47. Mohamed Yusuf Kokan, **Arabic and Persian in Carnatic 1710–1960,** Madras, 1974, p. 461.

48. A. J. Arberry, **Sufism,** London, 1950, pp. 86, 87. Also cf Tirmingham, **Sufi orders,** op ct. pp. 48, 49

49. **Ceylon Moor,** March 1935.

50. O.Lofgron, Art "Aydrus" in **Encyclopaedia of Islam.**

51. Hizbul Bahr is found in almost all the important collections of prayers and invocations. It is quoted by Ibn Batuta in his travels – vide Rihla, op. ct, vol. i, p. 40. An abridged version is given by Richard Burton in his **Personal Narrative of a pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Makkah** (London, 1898, Vol. 1, Chapter II). On the powers ascribed to its recitation, see Haji Khalifa, **Kashf Az Zunun** (Arabic), Istanbul, 1932, p. 58.

52. Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al Jazuli was the author of **Dalail ul Khairat** – vide Tirmingham, **Sufi, orders,** op. ct, p. 64

53. R. P. M. Ghani, **Islamiya Ilakkiyam,** Madras 1963, p. 210.

54. S. M. Kamaldeen, op. ct., p. 70.

55. For a detailed study of life, and works, and his contributions, see Mohamed Yusuf Kokan, op. ct., pp. 518 – 528 and also the introduction by I. L. Mohamed Nilam to English translation of **Fat-hud-Dayyan,** Colombo, 1963.

56. A. M. A. Azeez, **The West Reappraised,** Colombo, 1964, pp. 51 – 62.

57. Sultan Abdul Hameed II of Turkey (1876 – 1909) during this period was recognized by the Muslims all over as the defender of faith. In Sri Lanka, his name was used weekly in mosques during the Friday sermons and his picture printed in Germany adorned the house of many Muslims in all important towns. Even institutions were named after him, of this, Hameedia School at Colombo is a good example – Ibid, ch. on "A view of Pan Islam."

58. **Ibid,** pp. 123 – 131.

59. Mohamed Sameer, Ceylon Moors, Malays, and other Muslims of the Past, **Moors Islamic Cultural Home, The first twenty one years' souvenir, pp. 60 – 61.**

60. The first novel in Tamil was **"Pradhaba Muthaliyar Charithiram"** by Vedanayam Pillai, written in 1879.

61. **'Asrarul Alam'** has been rendered into English by I.L.M. Mohamed Nilam, published by Moors Islamic Cultural Home, Colombo, 1983.

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XIV

ASPECTS OF THE MUSLIM REVIVALIST MOVEMENT IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY SRI LANKA

Vijaya Samaraweera

The primary argument of this paper is that the 'revivalist movement' of the late nineteenth century acted as the major force that moulded the self-identity of the Muslim community within the context of Sri Lanka's plural society and that the revivalist movement constitutes the starting point of the 'modern history' of the community.

What is identified in the current literature on Sri Lanka as the 'revivalist movement' of the Muslims of the late nineteenth century was by no means an isolated phenomenon. In many respects, it could be subsumed under the broader social activism that encompassed all the traditional religious groups of the island at this time. The activism of the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims alike reflected, at the fundamental level, a reaction against the dominance achieved by Christianity and Christians under British rule.[1] This reaction was heightened by the attacks which were made on the traditional religious beliefs by overtly confident Evangelical Christian elements; superiority of Christianity over the other religions was asserted and their words and actions betrayed a contempt for 'Oriental' institutions, customs and traditions.[2] The brunt of the attacks had to be borne by the Buddhists. This was not surprising: they were not only the predominant religious group in the island but had also been the focal point of British policies in general as the inheritors of the legacy of the pre-colonial Sinhalese kingdoms. It was this group which emerged to challenge the 'alien' religion and its followers and the resultant 'cultural revivalism' gained wide currency among the adherents of what was claimed to be the religion of the founders of the nation. It was quickly evident that this social movement would not remain purely a cultural or religious affair; it took political overtones and had considerable ramifications for the emer-

gence of the nationalist movement of Sri Lanka.[3] The Buddhists were soon followed by the Hindus and Muslims. Like the Buddhists, they emulated the Christians in their organizational and agitational techniques– herein lay the critical factor that explains the common complexion of the three movements – and they also drew from the Buddhists who effectively acted as the pace-setters. The three movements were stimulated by and drew strength from one another. Yet, each had its own distinctive qualities. Thus, unlike the Buddhists, the movements among the Hindus and Muslims did not develop to take political overtones. Again, the Buddhists and Hindus displayed a self-reliance and self-sufficiency that was not within the grasp of the Muslim activists.[4] This latter point is particularly important in understanding the role the revivalist movement played among the Muslims.

The Buddhists as well as Hindus had a long and much cherished cultural and historical tradition behind them. The respective collective memory and self-identity of these two social groups can be traced back to the pre-Christian times – these had been reinforced again and again through interaction with one another, peaceful at times and hostile at other times, as well as through competition and conflict with foreign elements, and their respective group consciousness had even taken ideological dimensions.[5] Thus, the Hindus and Buddhists possessed within themselves a considerable reservoir of inner resources which they could draw upon in meeting the challenges they faced in the late nineteenth century. The Muslims lacked such means. This necessarily has to be explained in terms of their past. The dynamics that had shaped the evolution of the identity of the Buddhists and Hindus were not present among the Muslims historically. While the early history of the community has yet to be charted in any detail, it can safely be asserted that the Muslims were primarily seen in their historic role as traders, first as those who were involved in the import/export trade and then as the predominant elements in the internal itinerant trade. If there was integration of the Muslims into the polity and society of pre-colonial Sri Lanka, it was uneasily articulated – the fact that they were not subjected to overt discrimination on the part of the rulers through the centuries can be taken to testify to a neutral or non-threatening image. When their image and status changed, it came through the actions of the Western powers within whose orbit Sri Lanka fell from the turn of the sixteenth century: they were harshly treated by the Portuguese, both on economic and religious grounds, and then by the Dutch who were concerned about the economic dimensions of their activities.[6] The question which needs to be raised here is, why did not this traumatic experience foreshadow, if not actually create, a self-conscious identity among the Muslims? This is to be primarily explained by the fact that there was no

pre-existing framework upon which this experience could have been grounded and shaped to produce a group consciousness. Most importantly, the community never possessed either implicitly or explicitly, a political frame of reference which was uniquely their own. in contrast, both the Buddhists and Hindus had functioned in distinctively meaningful political realities. It is undeniable that a substantive political framework is not indispensable for the subsistence of group consciousness among a people – the Jews are the oft-cited example here – but if a political framework is absent, then surely there ought to be other cohesive forces which would help foster group identity among the people concerned. However, forces one would look for – such as religion, ethnicity and language – were either absent among the Muslims or failed to have implication for them in their historical past.

Very little is known of either the origins or the ethnicity of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. There is, however, an abundance of speculations. These range from the Portuguese colonial historians Barros and Queyroz, the Dutchman Valentyn to noted writers of the nineteenth century like Sir Alexander Johnston, Simon Casie Chitty and Sir John Emmerson Tennent. There was no consensus among these men on the issues they focussed on but by the later nineteenth century two distinct literary traditions had emerged concerning the origins and ethnicity of the Sri Lankan Muslims. One tradition had it that they originated from Dravidians in South India who had been converted to Islam by Arab traders who were long active in the Indian Ocean trade. The new Islamic adherents were (or, became) traders. The second tradition held that the Sri Lankan Muslims were descendants of Arab traders who, during the course of their trading activities in the Indian Ocean, established settlements in South India. What is to be noted is that both traditions portray the Sri Lankan Muslims as a group of traders who migrated from South India to the neighbouring island which had since pre-Christian times been a vital link in the Indian Ocean trade pattern. These two traditions are pertinent to the present discussion – for, the late nineteenth century search for self-identity involved the firm acceptance of one and an equally firm rejection of the other–but the point which needs to be emphasized at this juncture is that, irrespective of which tradition carries greater validity to the researcher, Muslims of Sri Lanka were, historically, very much in the periphery in relation to the 'heartland' of Islam. This meant not only a geographical separation but also the existence of a wide gulf in cultural and, indeed, even psychological terms. This was amply demonstrated by the fact that a crucial and integral part of the collective goal of the religion, the practice of **haj**, was virtually absent among them. One further point requires close attention: not only was there no visible linkages between the Sri Lankan Muslims and those who

were at the core of Islamic civilization but there seemed to have been very little interaction on their part with the co-religionists in the neighbouring land of India. Had there been close cultural links between the two groups, it is arguable that, **haj** would have found a central place among the religious practices of Sri Lankan Muslims, for **haj** was certainly vital to the Indian Muslims historically.[7]

By the time of British rule the settlement pattern of the Muslims in Sri Lanka had become well established. They were thinly spread out throughout the island, though there were notable concentrations, in particular in the Eastern Province (see, Table 1). The scattered geographical distribution perhaps reflected the central import trade carried within the community. It was certainly consistent with the image that persisted in British times. As Ponnambalam Arunachalam wrote in the **Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon** (1907), a volume highly treasured in elite circles of the times, the Muslims are an enterprising and speculative race. Their chief occupation is petty trade and as traders it is difficult to surpass them. They are ubiquitous and active in the metropolis and in the remotest village.[8]

TABLE 1
MUSLIM POPULATION, 1971 – PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Province	Number	% of the Total Muslim Population	% of the Total Provincial Population
Western	50,292	21.5	4.6
Central	29,997	12.8	4.5
Northern	12,354	5.3	3.3
Southern	20,308	8.7	3.2
Eastern	69,912	29.9	38.1
North Western	25,506	10.9	5.9
North Central	9,350	4.0	10.8
Uva	5,357	2.3	2.5
Sabaragamuwa	10,825	4.6	2.7
Total	233,901		% of the Total Population of the island: 5.7

Source: Denham 1912: 197, 199 and 232.

Arunachalam's portrait, at least with respect to occupation, was not wholly accurate. For, by the later nineteenth century, there were noteworthy groups within the Muslim community who had turned to subsistence agriculture especially in the Eastern Province. Nonetheless, the image that trading **per se** was the principal occupation of the Muslims subsisted publicly and indeed, Muslims too perceived themselves primarily as traders – this, as we shall see later, had important implications to the revivalist movement.

The scattered nature of the Muslim population meant that, as it has been argued, Muslims tended to adapt themselves to the life-style expectations of their respective non-Muslim neighbours rather than evolving a life-style which was, in every respect, their own[9] – in other words, there was no commonality in the life-style of the Muslims throughout the island. It is also quite evident that there were considerable socio-economic differences among the Muslims. The agriculturists, like the peasantry of the other communities, by and large carried out a marginal existence. Those who were petty traders obviously enjoyed a better economic situation, while there was another group, albeit highly restricted, who shared the life-style of the elite of the times as evidenced most notably in the revealing pictorial representations in the **Twentieth Century Impressions**.[10] Thus, the Muslim community was fragmented by class, life-style and regional/local (and perhaps even ethnic) differences. Nonetheless, they possessed a common denominator, their religion, which in the eyes of the other social groups separated them from the rest of the island's population. It is manifest, however, that the shared religious belief of the Muslims did not function as a unifying force in the past, though it certainly carried the potential of doing so in the future.

The fragmented nature of the community was perhaps best reflected at this time in the absence of any leaders, whether religious or political, who had acquired overall leadership standing at the national level – local elites were there but no identifiable national elite existed among them.[11] This is crucial in terms of the emergence of the revivalist movement of the Muslims. By the time revivalist stirrings took place among the Buddhists and Hindus, they already had a **national** leadership which possessed the capacity to weld the stirrings, crystallize and articulate them on a **national** platform – there is little doubt that these leaders grasped the sentiments that were emerging and moulded them to present an agenda which was meaningful to all within the respective groups. There was no one among the Muslims who could have been compared to the major figures that the Buddhists and Hindus produced, Anagarika Dharmapala and Arumuga Navalar respectively. This is important because it provides the contextual

framework for understanding the role which was to be played by the man who was to be thrust into the leadership position in the Muslim revivalist movement, Arabi Pasha.

Arabi Pasha was of course the 'hero' of Tel al-Kabir. Arabi's revolt in Egypt in 1881-82 had been given publicity in the local English-language press but his activities evinced no particular interest among the Sri Lankan Muslims. In sharp contrast, his arrival with his key lieutenants in the island as exiles under the custody of British authorities caused considerable excitement within the community. Arabi quickly acquired the status of a much respected personage and there is no doubt that as knowledge about his heroic stance in Egypt increased within the community, his standing too was enhanced. Indeed, the mantle of leadership of the Muslims was soon thrust upon him and he became the catalyst of the Muslim revivalism.[12]

Arumuga Navalar and Anagarika Dharmapala had presented themselves to their respective social groups as religious figures. Dharmapala in particular eventually became, certainly in the eyes of the British, a controversial political figure whose political activities could not be explicitly demarcated from his cultural or religious activism. Arabi, on the other hand, came before the Muslim community primarily as a political figure and he carried no religious credentials within himself. Yet, the movement he began to lead turned out to be the least political in its implications. This says as much about the Muslims as it does about the man whose political exploits, though carried out in a distant land, could not be matched by any one within the island, whether Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist. As far as Arabi is concerned, it is evident that he saw his stay in Sri Lanka – at no point was it made clear to him how long his period of exile would last – as that of a peaceful and law-abiding person: Sir William Gregory, the ex-Governor of Sri Lanka who with his wife became a great admirer of Arabi, wrote after visiting the exiles that they are neither engaged in political intrigues, nor assumed the attitudes of martyrs, but have, with great dignity and good taste, cheerfully accepted, and made the best of their position . . . .[13]

It is of course clear that Arabi, as an exile, did not have the freedom to engage in an overtly political role in Sri Lanka. Further, it should be noted that there was little likelihood of the Muslims themselves seeking out a political path for themselves through the revivalist movement. This will become clearer as we discuss the distinctive characteristics of the revivalist movement in detail. It is sufficient to note here that as a movement which was essentially an inward-looking affair, carving out of a political posture within the colonial context was certainly not meaningful to those who were involved in it.[14]

The role played by Arabi in the Muslim revivalism was, in many respects, a role which was defined for him by the Sri Lankan Muslims who became the leading activists.[15] The singularly important service he performed for the community during his stay in Sri Lanka (1883–1901) was to function as the symbol around whom the Muslims could gather: a group that lay dormant – the Buddhist and Hindu revivalist activities were in full swing by the time of Arabi's arrival – was galvanised into action. It was precisely here that Arabi's immediate Egyptian past counted: while his political exploits gave him stature, it was his role as an 'Islamic Resistor' to European powers that became meaningful for the Sri Lankan Muslims. Arabi was very much aware of the symbolism he carried in his person and while he did not become the driving force of action of the revivalist movement, he did not hesitate to come forward to inspire and activate the community. It should also be noted that Arabi himself gave a special meaning to his exile in Sri Lanka by asserting that he chose Sri Lanka as the place of exile because an Arab tradition depicted Sri Lanka as the home of 'Man's First Parents'.[16]

The initial focus of the Muslim revivalism was to be on education. This reflected the extent to which the thinking and actions of the leading activists were influenced by the course and direction taken by the Buddhist and Hindu revivalist movements. Education had attracted the early attention of Buddhists and Hindus alike. From the beginning of their work in Sri Lanka, education had been viewed by the Christian missionary organizations as the primary vehicle for conversion and not surprisingly, they had acquired a prominent place in the colonial educational structure. Of the formal education offered to the Sri Lankan students, English education easily offered greater prestige as well as rewards: above all, an English education was an essential prerequisite for entry into government service and to the 'independent professions' – law and medicine – that opened up in the second half of the nineteenth century. Opportunities for acquiring an English education were quite limited and given the access they had to the structure, it was to be expected that the Christians would become the conspicuous element in both the public service and the independent professions. For the Buddhists and Hindus, the lesson to be drawn was not difficult: whether it was as a way of challenging the superiority of the 'alien' religion or to enable their children to compete on an equal footing with the Christians in employment, steps had to be taken to create their own educational network which offered 'modern' instruction.

There had of course been Buddhists and Hindus who had taken advantage of the new educational facilities from the beginning (conversion was not

mandatory, though it certainly offered rich rewards). Few Muslims, in striking contrast, had been attracted at all. There were three principal reasons for this. First, the teaching of Arabic and the Koran was, as elsewhere in the Islamic world, critical to the education of the Muslim child in Sri Lanka and provision for neither was made in the English schools. Secondly, there was a widespread feeling within the community that, as a people who dependent upon trade, English education was of little value: as a contemporary newspaper once put it, 'the trading instincts of Ceylon Muhammadans have been developed at the expense of intellectual powers'.[17] Thirdly, missionary organizations had recognized very early that the conversion of Muslims into Christianity was a formidable task which promised little chances of success and consequently, the Muslims as a community were virtually ignored by the missionaries in their educational effort. By the later nineteenth century it was generally held that the Muslims were the most educationally backward community in the island. The **madrasas,** the traditional educational institutions of the Muslims, offered education to the Muslim children but their value carried little meaning outside the community. As a government educational official remarked in 1893:

> The Mohammedan parent often chooses for his son while at school an education which will secure for him an honoured place among the learned of his community rather than one which will command a success in modern professions in official life.[18]

It was M. C. Siddi Lebbe (1838–1898), the first Muslim to be admitted as a Proctor before the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka and who had established a lucrative practice in Kandy, who emerged as the champion and propagandist of English education for the community. Siddi Lebbe, in many ways a visionary whose thinking often ran counter to the community, had in fact publicly urged the community to take to English education even before Arabi arrived. He realized, as others within the community began to perceive eventually, that, with the new activism of the Buddhists and Hindus in the educational field, the Muslims would be left even further behind and that this would certainly prove to be detrimental to the younger generation of Muslims. Further, the example of the Buddhists and Hindus demonstrated that the primary objection of Muslim parents to English education as it was then provided – lack of facility for the study of the Koran and Arabic – could be overcome; it was surely possible to have a 'modern' instruction which emphasized religious values. Arabi's stance too, proved to be of considerable importance: his son was being educated in a missionary school and, as he publicly pointed out, since his son was so well grounded in the Koran [that] it was impossible he would

become a Christian.[19] Siddi Lebbe and other activists who joined him were also able to argue that, with the increasing complexity of the economy, trading could no longer be carried out in the age-old fashion and that there was a need to 'modernize' in this vital area – in particular, there was an increasing realization that government regulation of the internal trade would come and that to depend on those outside the community for an understanding of this new phenomenon would prove to be dangerous. Over and beyond these points lay the message which Siddi Lebbe had been striving to put across to the community at large for some time: the preoccupation of the Muslims with trading and the perception that it was the only occupation in which they could demonstrate their capabilities was shortsighted. As the **Muslim Naisan,** the newspaper which Siddi Lebbe had founded in 1882 to 'awaken' an interest in education among the Muslims, declared in its inaugural issue, their Arabic forefathers had made 'Great Conquests' but their descendants in Sri Lanka were truly in a 'retrogressive state' and their re-generation was possible only through a commitment to education.[20]

The establishment of the first 'Anglo-Muhammedan' school (Al Madurasathul Khairiyyatul Islamiah) at Maradana in November 1884 marked the beginning of the Muslim educational movement. The following years of the century saw the opening up of several other schools which provided an English education (including Al Madurasathuz Zahira at the site of the dormant Al Madurasathul in 1894). The nature and purpose of these institutions were aptly described by the Director of Public Instruction in 1895 when he called the Muslim educational movement 'chiefly secular as distinct from, or supplementary to, sectarian instruction'.[21] The Muslim educational movement was modernistic in orientation, though in keeping with the religious sensibilities of the Muslims some key traditional elements were given the pride of place. Thus, while there were repeated calls for the de-emphasizing of the teaching of Arabic in the schools, the status of Arabic as a fundamental requirement of the students was not touched. That those who were involved in the movement were not hidebound by tradition was best exemplified in the fact that the educational opportunities were not restricted to Muslim boys alone – indeed, institutions for girls were established in several areas. Their eventual success was limited but at a time where there was strong opposition to the education of females in general – Kandyan leaders, for example, vehemently opposed female education – the work of men like Siddi Lebbe (who established the first girls school in Kandy with his sister as the Head Teacher in 1893) should draw particular attention. Financial support for the new schools came from wealthy urban businessmen and landowners, of whom A. M. Wapche Marikkar (1868 – 1925) was particularly note-

worthy. This was a significant development because philanthropic work in relation to education was not within the ambit of traditional **zakat.** The Muslims were no doubt following the lead of the Buddhists and Hindus and financial support for education thenceforward became, for all the communities, a socially prestigious and rewarding activity, though such 'secular' efforts never eclipsed the traditionally recognized philanthropy which had a strong religious bias. It is also to be noted that financial support alone did not prove to be sufficient for the long-term survival and growth of the educational institutions that were set up. Often they foundered on the lack of community support, at times because the community failed to share the vision of the activists and at other times because competition arose among factions for the control of the institutions. Clearly the zeal of a number of individuals was not enough. As time went by, the value of organization and planning as well as co-ordination of the activities in the educational field became all the more evident to the Muslims, especially with the results that were obtained by the Buddhists and Hindus who were active in education. What the Muslims lacked was, as the **Ceylon Muhammedan** pointed in 1901, an organization similar to the Buddhist Theosophical Society which in the decade between 1880 and 1890 had established over forty Buddhist schools, several of which eventually attained national recognition. The **Ceylon Muhammedan** editorially called for the creation of an organization along the lines of the BTS but the call went unheeded.[22] From time to time there surfaced demands that the government recognise the backward state of the Muslims educationally and provide special concessions to the Muslims to improve educational facilities but in the absence of a sustained and organised campaign, such urgings had little chance of success. It is easy to belittle the Muslim educational movement, for the efforts of these years eventually succeeded in producing only one major institution, Zahira. However, there are other factors which have to be evaluated. There is little doubt that the number of Muslim children who began to acquire a formal education increased during these years. Significantly, contemporary evidence shows that not all the new students obtained their education in schools founded especially for the Muslims. Christian missionary schools began to attract students from the community. What this reflects is that there was an increasing recognition of the value of an English education. In particular, the perception that an English education was necessary to overcome the disadvantageous position the Muslims found themselves in **vis-a-vis** the other social groups gained wider currency: in the words of the **Ceylon Muhammedan,** 'in order to take the proper place among our fellow countrymen, we should educate our children.'[23] It is of course no surprise to find the value of English being stressed 'as a medium of business', for English was attaining the status of the commercial language of

the world.[24] The results of the new awareness were not to come forth easily or quickly – of the 437 Sri Lankan boys who were successful at the Cambridge Senior Examination between 1890 and 1906 only 6 were Muslim – [25] but a decisive change had taken place in that some members of the community at least had come to recognize that the educational future of their children rested in their own hands and that this future entailed a departure from the traditional educational structure.

While the formal educational structure attracted considerable attention, non-formal channels to promote education within the community were not ignored. The example to be followed was that of the Buddhists and Hindus who in turn had borrowed from the Christians. Numerous, 'Literary' and 'Friendship' societies were formed by the Muslim activists, all concerned, to a lesser or greater degree, with the promotion of the study of English. Their success, however, was limited. More important were the newspapers and journals that began to appear. The **Muslim Naisan** published in Tamil by Siddi Lebbe, was the first organ to specifically cater to the Muslim community. The message it unfailingly conveyed was that there should be a awakening and regeneration of the community to face the reality of the times. The **Ceylon Muhammedan**, founded in 1900, was the first English newspaper which was controlled by Muslims and its aim was, as expressed in its inaugural issue, to establish that 'Ceylon Muhammedans' – the contemporary usage for Muslims of Sri Lanka as distinguished from the Muslims who saw India as their home – 'only want an opportunity to show that [they] possess qualities which have been hitherto covered as with a cloak.'[26] None of the newspapers and journals that were begun at the turn of the century had staying power. The explanation was a familiar one, what we have already seen with respect to educational institutions: lack of broad-based community support and factional conflict. The conflicts among the various groups who vied for prominence in these years of activism was amply reflected in the press. Newspapers were specifically begun to promote or attack particular groups. Given the highly limited prospective readership, these conflicts tended only to adversely affect all the newspapers. There is no doubt that much energy was dissipated in fighting one another through the press but nonetheless, these conflicts should not be seen entirely in negative terms. Given that for the first time the community was attempting to define and set goals for itself within the context of Sri Lanka's plural society, it was perhaps inevitable that there would be differences of opinion and struggle for influence and power involving different individuals and groups. The newspapers, by functioning as the forums for different perspectives and point of view, played a valuable role. Though they did not reach a majority of the Muslim population, the newspapers and journals ably articulated the pressing needs of the

community and it can safely be assumed that the respective messages were heard and abided by at least a segment of the people. Equally significant was the fact that the press brought news of 'co-religionists' elsewhere before the local Muslims: a basically inward-looking people thus began to be conscious of the developments which were taking place in other Islamic countries.

If education and journalism were indices of the growing collective identity of the Muslims, then its height could be said to have been reached with the controversy that arose over the origins and ethnicity of the community. The two issues surfaced in relation to the reform of the legislature. The Legislative Council, established in 1833 as the 'sounding board' of colonial opinion for the colonial government, had nominated members who were chosen on 'communal' basis. However, the Muslims had not been given separate representation and for all practical purposes the Tamil unofficial member was recognized as their spokesman as well. Why the Tamil member was given this added responsibility was never made clear – the sharing of a common language, Tamil, perhaps provides an answer. The reform of the legislature became a distinct possibility in the late 1880s and the Muslims, reflecting their new separate consciousness, now sought a separate voice. Precisely at this time, Ponnambalam Ramanathan, who had been representing the Tamils in the Legislative Council since 1879, began to advance publicly the thesis that the origins of the Sri Lankan Muslims should be traced to South India and that they were in fact Dravidians who had been converted to Islam.[27] The timing of Ramanathan thesis was viewed by the Muslim activists as an insidious attempt on the part of the Tamil member to perpetuate the existing method of legislative representation, thereby allowing him to speak on behalf of a far larger body of people than he was legitimately entitled. As one of Ramanathan's leading critics, I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, commented:

> It was thought, nay believed, that [Ramanathan's] object in calling Moors Tamils in race was to dissuade the Government from appointing a Moorish member in the Council, it having leaked out then that the Government were contemplating to appoint such a one, and to make them understand that there was no such necessity for taking such a step, as the Moors did not form a distinct race.[28]

Clearly the Muslim activists were no longer willing to acquiesce to the arrangements which had subsumed the Muslims under the Tamils in the political arena.

Not surprisingly, Ramanathan was vehemently attacked for his views. The critics did not deny that there were cultural similarities between the Tamils and Muslims; this could be explained, according to them, as the inevitable result of the acculturation of a minority group. The use of Tamil as the every-day language of the Muslim community could equally be explained: Tamil was the **lingua franca** of commerce of the Indian Ocean at the time Arab traders made their entry and they adopted the language for obvious reasons of convenience. Moreover, Arabic was not forgotten and the importance with which it was viewed was reflected in its place in education. The physical resemblance of the Muslims to Tamils – a most telling point from Ramanathan's perspective as to the ethnicity of the Muslims – was strongly discounted and the 'Arabic' profile of the members of the community was emphasized. Significantly, the critics did not deny that there was admixture of Arabic and Tamil blood; in fact, it was even admitted that some of the original Arab traders took Tamil women as their partners when they settled in South India – this was explicable in terms of the circumstances they faced but this factor alone could and should not obscure the fact that the true origins of the community was to be traced to Arab traders. The critical factor then was to be precise about the forefathers. Who were they ? Here, the critics turned to what they claimed to be the treasured tradition of the community; they were descendants of the Hashemites who had left Arabia in the seventh century on account of persecution of the Omayyad dynasty to become a migratory tribe.[29]

There is little doubt that the articulation of this tradition and opposition to the Ramanathan thesis meant in essence the identification of the Muslims, in an unambiguous fashion, as a separate social group. They were separate from the Tamils as they were separate from the 'Coast Moors', the recently arrived Indian traders who too were adherents of Islam. While the immediate circumstances which gave rise to the specific public assertion about the separateness of the Muslims should be taken into account, it should also be borne in mind that the wider contextual framework provides key explanatory material. The revivalist activities of the Buddhists and Hindus had brought forth the heightening of their respective collective identities; the emphasis on being a Buddhist and a Hindu necessarily had implications for those of the other social groups in the island's plural society and it is significant that the Muslims, rather than being subject to a separate definition through the mere actions of two groups who were emphasizing and validating their own distinctive identities, sought to forge the collective identity on their own. Therein lay the primary significance of the Muslim revivalist movement.

In the ensuing years there emerged among the Muslims a conscious effort to develop and strengthen what they believed to be their original 'Arabian' connections. The considerable activism of the Muslims in India no doubt came to their knowledge but any bonding or sharing of an identity with them was explicitly rejected in favour of the Middle East. Arabi's presence and his inspirational leadership mattered in this development but the critical factor was of course their Arabic descent. The Sri Lankan Muslims, like Islamic peoples elsewhere, saw the relevant symbol of Islamism in the Sultan of Turkey, the 'Caliph of Islam.' The identification with Turkey took many tangible as well as symbolic forms. The Golden Jubilee of the Sultan's accession to power in 1900 was widely and enthusiastically celebrated by them. The next decade and half was to reveal the collection of funds for the completion of the Damascus-Medina railway, the launching of the Red Crescent Fund in support of the co-religionists involved in the Balkan War, the public condemnation of the actions of Sir Edward Gray in Macedonia and the expression of support for the Turks against the Italians. Turkey acknowledged these gestures by establishing a Consulship and a Vice-Consulship in Sri Lanka to which prominent Muslims were appointed. These became much sought after appointments, for they carried great honour and prestige in the local Muslim circles.[30]

The identification of themselves as Arabs could be interpreted as an example of Islamization[31] which was a concomitant of the Muslim revivalism. Islamization was also amply revealed in the reforms which the activists sought among the Muslims at the behavioral level. The reforms were not successful in their entirety but this should not diminish their importance. At the fundamental level what the activists attempted to accomplish was the 'cleansing' of the religion of practices which were perceived to be objectionable not only in terms of the orthodox beliefs but also within the context of the times they lived. Thus, they spent considerable energy to 'eradicate' such customs as the 'dowry' system that existed among the Muslims in general. Dowry was seen as a 'slur' to the community and what lay unexpressed here was the recognition that it was a borrowing from the Tamils and as such it should be rejected for the sake of greater conformity with the religio-cultural prescriptions of Islamism. Again, efforts were made to reform Muslim marriage and divorce proceedings. The traditional arrangements, the recording of information in **kaddutam** by **lebbes**, had serious shortcomings, most notably irregularities committed by **lebbes** whose testimony, in the absence of government-sponsored registration scheme, was decisive when conflicts arose between parties.

The law relating to Muslim marriages and divorces too, was increasingly proving to be unsatisfactory. The formal personal law of the Muslims was

to be found in the code which the British proclaimed in 1806, which in turn had as its basis the code which was formulated for the Muslim community by the Dutch Governor Falck in 1707. The Dutch code had originated in Batavia – indeed, evidence indicates that it was a mere replication of the laws applied to the Muslims in Dutch possessions in the East Indies –[32] and while it received the approval of the government functionaries from the community who were consulted by both the Dutch and the British, it was evident that there were inherent problems in it. For example, the code reflected the principles of the Shāf'ī law, whereas the Muslims of Sri Lanka were not all adherents of the Shāf'ī sect. The problems which cropped up, from the perspective of the activists, were numerous and they were epitomized in the Supreme Court decision which was handed out in 1871 legitimising divorce of a Muslim outside the ambit of the code of law. This decision directly led to the initiation of a movement to reform Muslim marriage and divorce law which was led by M. C. Abdul Rahiman (–1899) who was to become the first Muslim member when separate Muslim representation was allowed in the Legislative Council. The efforts culminated with the enactment of the Mohammedan Marriage Registration Ordinance of 1886. The act, however, was strongly resisted by Muslim religious leaders and it was not promulgated until 1888 and then too in an amended form. The crucial change was that registration of Muslim marriages was made optional in contrast to the mandatory requirement set forth in the original act.[33]

This is an appropriate juncture to focus on the standing of the activists of the revivalist movement **vis-a-vis** the religious leaders who traditionally wielded great power and influence within the community. What is abundantly clear is that the activists believed that the tasks which confronted the community at large could not be accompanied by the traditional religious elements. Indeed, they have held that the 'backwardness' of the community was the result of the dominance held by the **mullahs. Mullahs,** they argued, were not only incompetent but were also involved in corruption, especially in their management of the religious properties. The importance of having better educated **mullahs** – not only in the 'modern' sense but also in the 'traditional' sense – came to be stressed heavily. There were also repeated demands that the government intervene to regularise and control the management of religious properties along the lines of the Buddhist Temporalities Commission which had been placed in charge of the lands belonging to Buddhist religious institutions. The efforts of the activists to create an educational structure which was distinct from the **madarasas** too was reflective of the concern with the power and influence of the religious leaders. In point of fact, education – in its broadest sense – had a fundamental importance for the activists, for only through an

educative process was it possible for the community to rise above the backward state it was placed in. What is relevant to emphasize is that in providing these prescriptions the activists were deliberately encroaching on areas which were traditionally viewed as the exclusive concern of the religious figures. Equally important, some of the activists did not hesitate to make pronouncements about doctrinal matters as well. Thus, Siddi Lebbe produced a work entitled **Asarul Alam (The Mysteries of the Universe)** whose implications for the exclusive jurisdiction of the **Ulamas** over doctrinal matters could easily be seen. **Asarul Alam** became the target of the ultimate religious sanction, the **fatawa.** His experience at the hands of the religious figures led Siddi Lebbe to comment later that:

> The Ulamas and Alims are against me. I am not afraid of any. . . If the Ulamas view my book with good intention, they will see the truth. If they read my book with 'prejudice', they will find my work all wrong. I need not fear them. During the last twenty five years all sorts of Ulamas and gatherings of large number of Muslims rose against me and my work nevertheless landed in the 'Harbour of Safety'.(34)

Siddi Lebbe was an **Alim,** one learned in Arabic and the Koran. So was the other leading polemicist against the **Ulamas,** Abdul Azeez. Yet, they were not viewed on the basis of their religious credentials but for their worldliness. That men like Siddi Lebbe and Abdul Azeez were, through their writings and actions, challenging the undisputed dominance of the religious personages did not go unnoticed: it was not only the **Ulamas** who resisted them in that other laymen too found reason to criticize them for their involvement in doctrinal matters. The success the religious figures achieved in postponing the marriage registration act of 1886 was indicative of the continued influence they wielded. Equally, the fact that they failed to get the act nullified meant that they could no longer hold sway in an indisputable manner. To that extent, the Muslim revivalist movement marked an important departure.

In retrospect, the importance of the revivalist movement for the Muslims could be identified at two levels, ideological and functional. These were not mutually exclusive – indeed, they were complementary to one another. What one sees in the activism of the Muslims was at once an attempt to transform the community to fit the activists' perception of the contemporary times and a concern for the need to emphasize and strengthen the separate Muslim identity as a religious group. Thus, reformism became a key feature but there were no indiscriminate attacks on tradition which would have totally alienated the activists from the people whom they were

attempting to influence. It is true that some of the activists came, with their focus especially on doctrinal matters, dangerously close to cutting themselves off from the larger community but no one could have accused them of mounting criticism and calling for change merely for the sake of change. That they were not ostracized says much for the message they sought to deliver and the fertile grounds upon which they worked. Change was relevant – indeed, necessary – for the Muslims were faced with a 'new' experience in the modernity of British Sri Lanka; change meant not social punishment and alienation but a greater harmony and unity of the Muslims in the increasingly Anglicized reality of the times. Clearly, there was in these years a sharpening of the lines which separated the Muslims from the other social groups in the plural society. In this heightening of self-identity, forces within the Muslim community played the key role; the differentiation of the Muslims from the rest of the population became much more consciously established by the Muslims themselves. The impact of the socio-cultural movements of the other social groups should not be underestimated, though, the parallel search for self-identity on the part of the Buddhists and Hindus brought into sharp focus their respective uniqueness in relation to the other groups, including the Muslims. It is true that, for the Muslims, 'religious belonging' defined 'social belonging'[35] but it is arguable that the wider ramifications of this at the behavioral level became manifested within the Sri Lankan polity and society only with the self-proclamation of their distinctive identity through the revivalist movement. This of course does not mean that the scattered and fragmented Muslim population was welded together to produce a truly homogeneous and unified community. Indeed, the revivalist movement largely touched only the urban areas. Much of the rural areas were left beyond its pale – this was particularly true of the Muslims of the Eastern Province: while virtually all other Muslims were brought, to a lesser or a greater degree, within the ambit of the enthusiasm for education, the Eastern Province was untouched and not a single school was established there for Muslim students specifically during this period of time. Nonetheless, a crucial factor of importance in relation to the future of the Muslim community should be observed: the revivalist activities brought about the transition of an urban-based group of individuals from a regional elite status to a national elite status. On the one hand, this had what one could call negative potential: with greater visibility and viability of the Muslims as a social group, there was bound to be struggle for leadership and power and influence among the elite. Indications of this development were certainly there by the end of the nineteenth century: the question was whether those who were involved in factional conflict would be able to rise above purely parochial considerations to engage in defining their role within the context of the Muslim community as a whole. On the

other, the emergence of a national elite augured well for a future in which 'communalist' politics would predominate: the structure for communal mobilization through vertical channels came into being. Whether one would negate the other was undoubtedly the key question.

NOTES

1. The British conquered the Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka from the Dutch in 1796 and obtained the cessation of the independent Sinhalese kingdom in the interior in 1815.

2. For the role of Christianity and its proponents see, K. M. de Silva 1973.

3. See in particular, Malalgoda 1976.

4. The Hindu movement has yet to be studied in detail. For a general account see, K. M. de Silva 1973.

5. See, Samaraweera 1977.

6. The Portuguese obtained control of maritime Sri Lanka in 1596 and they were succeeded by the Dutch in 1658 who ruled until 1796. For the history of the Muslims under these powers see, C. R. de Silva 1966; Goonewardene 1960.

7. See, Rothermund 1975: 2.

8. Arunachalam 1907: 341.

9. Mauroof 1972: 66.

10. See , Wright 1907. It should be emphasized that very little data is available about the socio-economic conditions of the Muslims during the period under discussion. The brief observations have been based on scattered comtemporary evidence. See also, the 'ideal types' of Muslim traders described in, Mauroof 1972.

11. I adopt here the typology presented in, Roberts 1974.

12. Arabi's period of exile in Sri Lanka and his impact upon the revivalist movement of the Muslims have been examined in detail in, Samaraweera 1976.

13. **British Parliamentary Papers,** 1884/5 [c. 4243] : 17.

14. I will not offer detailed discussion of all the different activities that took place under the rubric of 'revivalism' by the Muslims, for I have examined them in detail elsewhere. See, Samaraweera 1979. My focus, therefore, will be primarily on the distinctive characteristics and features of the movement.

15. The discussion which is to follow will refer to the leading activists.. For fuller information on their respective roles see, Samaraweera 1979.

16. Ferguson 1884: 172–174.

17. **Ceylon Standard,** 1 January 1901.

18. **AR** 1893: D22.

19. **Times of Ceylon,** 12 January 1883.

20. **Muslim Naisan,** 24 December 1883.

21. **AR** 1895: D16.

22. **Ceylon Muhammedan,** 18 February 1900.

23. **Ceylon Muhammedan,** 3 January 1801.

24. **Ibid.**

25. Data supplied by Dr. Michael Roberts of University of Adelaide to whom I am grateful.

26. **Ceylon Muhammedan,** 17 September 1900.

27. See in particular, Ramanathan 1888.

28. Abdul Azeez 1889, 2.

29. See, Abdul Azeez 1889. See also, **Muslim Naisan,** 27 June and 3 July 1885; **Times of Ceylon,** 9 Sept. 1889.

30. For details see, Samaraweera 1979.

31. My use of the term Islamization follows the definition of Rothermund 1975.

32. Nadaraja 1972: 14.

33. For the evolution of Muslim law see, Akbar 1935; Nadaraja 1972.

34. **Asarul Alam,** p. 193 quoted in, MICH 1965: 61. For the doctrinal conflicts that took place see, MICH 1965: 60-64: MICH 1969: 16-18.

35. cf. Houtart 1974: 333.

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XV

ISLAMIC LAW IN SRI LANKA

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MATRIMONIAL LAWS

H. M. Z. Farouque,

1. INTRODUCTION

In the eighth and ninth centuries a Muslim trading community flourished along Sri Lanka's coastal belt, marking 'the fruition of private enterprise initiated without the backing of arms of coercion of any kind and fostered with the ardent patronage of the local sovereigns.'[1] Arab authors of the Middle Ages, such as Ibn Battuta[2] who visited the Island in 1344, have remarked on the religious tolerance enjoyed by the Muslims who came in the wake of the Arab sea-faring activity in the Indian Ocean. From Idrisi's account of the Sinhalese court of the twelfth century, it would appear that the Muslims as well as the Christians and Jews were accorded complete freedom of worship and a measure of internal jurisdiction to be governed by their own laws and usages, apart from being actively associated in the royal consultative council.[3] Dr. H. G. Reissner is of the view that in line with their conception that all law was derived from revealed scripture, these communities must have been governed by their respective legal systems in the 'whole range of civilian commitments from marriage contracts to commercial obligations'.[4] When the Portuguese arrived in 1505, Colombo which was the chief port and the mart of the Island's trade with a largely Muslim population, had a court of justice to settle disputes according to Islamic Law.[5]

The Ceylon Moors[6] are the descendants, first, of the nucleus of Arab settlers and the converts to Islam among the local population with whom they intermarried, and secondly, of Muslims of similar origin from across

the Palk Strait, particularly Kailpattinam, who too came as traders and remained to settle down, mainly with the outburst of Muslim commercial activity in the region in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Amid its varied ethnic composition, the Island's civil disorders and the later Portuguese and Dutch suppression, this relatively small community preserved its identity principally by its adherence to the **Sharia** under the influence of the **Ulema**[7] exercised through the mosques over the congregations scattered throughout the country. The cherished memory of its Hashemite Arab connexion[8] also perhaps contributed to this result. The Malays, who form a distinct component of the Muslim community, came as soldiers and political exiles from Java, Sumatra and Malacca in the latter half of the seventeenth century, when Sri Lanka was under Dutch rule. Sri Lanka's Muslims, Moors as well as Malays, follow[9] the school of law **madhhab** founded by Imam Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafii (767-820 A.D.), 'the colossus of Islamic legal history'[10] to whom belongs, as Professor Joseph Schacht has shown in his **Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence,** much of the credit for having 'elaborated a structure of law that is, from the point of view of logical perfection, one of the most brilliant essays of human reasoning.'[11]

The law of Islam, based on the Holy Quran, the sayings and practice of the Prophet Muhammad, the consensus of his Companions and the analogical deductions of the jurists, embraces a wide range of subjects, as will be seen from the following list of chapters in a popular Shafii text such as **Minhaj-et-Talibin:** purity, prayer, alms or charity tax, fasting, hajj pilgrimage, marriage, dower, divorce, maintenance, funeral ceremonies, forbidden beverages, eatables, inheritance, sale, bankruptcy, partnership, principal and agent, loan, pre-emption, joint stock companies, contract of hiring, charitable endowment, gifts, wills, deposits, crimes, administration of justice, procedure, evidence, etc. In respect of matters that related mainly to the daily religious and social life of the community, enumerated in the first half of this list, the Muslims of Sri Lanka, living as they did in more or less compact settlements, followed the law as a matter of internal communal regulation. A knowledge of the principles involved was imparted to the people by the **Ulema** among whom were men who had spent years of study and travel in India and the Arab lands, particularly in the Hejaz where they went on the Hajj pilgrimage. Mediaeval Arab writers have referred to two Ceylon Muslims who had attained renown for their learning in Islamic law and religion, viz., Abdur Rahman bin Abi Hatim Musa as-Sailani, who was in Baghdad in 877 A.D., and Ismail bin Mustafa al-Kalambavi 'whose marginal notes on the famous interpretation of al-Quran by Masud bin Sad al-Taftazani (end of 15th Century A.D.) and

other metaphysical works have been noticed by Brockelmann appreciatively.'[12]

The restrictions imposed on the Muslims by the Portuguese and early Dutch administrations led to a virtual cessation of their vitalising overseas contacts in the cultural as well as commercial fields. Harried and proscribed by the rulers for over two centuries from the advent of colonial rule in 1505[13] and having thus to struggle for its very existence, the community gradually lost its traditions of learning. In due course the traditional schools **(madrasas)** attached to the mosques suffered a set-back from which they never recovered.

2. FALCK'S CODE; NORTH'S PROCLAMATION

The Dutch East India Company's original policy of applying the Dutch law to the indigenous population in the East Indies gave way to one of recognising Asian customary and religious laws. The Muslims, as well as the Tamils of Jaffnapatnam, whose laws and customs had survived the Portuguese occupation, were thus able to regulate their civil transactions in accordance with them, with the Dutch conquest of the Maritime Provinces in the middle of the seventeenth century.

The isolation imposed on the Muslim community had, however, resulted in a marked decline in the level of proficiency in the **Sharia** even among their headmen who were in consequence apt to render arbitrary decisions on matters of family law and inheritance. Governor I. W. Falck sought in 1770 to make good this deficiency by securing from the Governor-General of Batavia a short Code of Islamic marriage and succession laws that had been compiled from the books of authority and promulgated in the East Indies ten years before; it was contained in section 34 of the chapter entitled **'Bysondere Wetten aangaande Mooren off Mahometanen en andere Inlandsche Natien'** (Special Laws relating to Moors or Mohammedans and other native races) in the New Statutes of Batavia of 1766. The Dutch Code was translated into Tamil and circulated among the headmen; and 'upon their approving and declaring it to be perfectly applicable to the circumstances of all the Moors under their superintendence, (Governor Falck) ordered it to be considered law by all Dutch Courts of justice,[14] with but slight adaptations to local circumstances as Professor T. Nadaraja has pointed out.[15]

Upon the cession of the Dutch possessions to the British, these Special Laws were saved by the guarantee given by Governor North's Proclamation of 23 September, 1799, that justice should be administered by all courts

of justice in the Maritime Provinces according to the laws and institutions that existed under the Dutch regime, subject to alterations made by lawful authority.[16] This was in accordance with the established principle of International Law and British constitutional practice that the laws of a conquered territory continued in force until they were altered by the conqueror.[16a] The Royal Charter of Justice of April, 1801, section xxxii, expressly provided 'that in cases of Cingalese or Musulman natives, their inheritance and succession to lands, rents and goods, and all matters of contract and dealing between party and party shall be determined. . . in the case of Musulmans by the laws and usages of the Musulmans, and where one of the parties shall be a Cingalese or a Musulman, by the laws and usages of the defendant.'

3 1806 CODE

In 1805, Governor Maitland ordered the Provincial Courts to adhere strictly to the customary laws. As for the Muslims, Chief Justice Alexander Johnston found that Falck's Code had been published widely enough in the community by the headmen, and ordered that printed copies be displayed in the chief mosques of Colombo; translations had been made in Tamil, Arabic-Tamil as well as English. In August 1806, Johnston submitted to the Governor-in-Council the Code entitled 'Special Laws concerning Maurs or Mahomedans'; it was described as being 'observed by the Moors in the Province of Colombo and acknowledged by the Head Moormen of the District as adapted to the present usages' of the community, and bore the signatures of twenty notable men among them. It was approved and ordered to be published and observed 'throughout the whole of the Province of Colombo.' This Code 'is in substance a translation' of the Code in section 34 of the **Bysondere Wetten** in the New Statutes of Batavia on which 'the code in force in Ceylon in the last decades of the Dutch era was also modelled.'[17] It was divided into two chapters called 'Titles' – the first (sections 1 to 63) dealing with 'matters of succession, right of inheritances and other incidents occasioned by death,' and the second (sections 64 to 102) with 'matrimonial affairs' (marriage and divorce).

The Code was extended to Muslims throughout the Island by section 10 of Ordinance No. 5 of 1852. Even before this the Supreme Court had applied Muslim law to the Moors in Kandy on the footing that they were 'governed by their own laws and customs of inheritance and marriage which are founded on their religion.'[18] Bertram, C. J., described the Code as 'a very rough codification of certain portions of a very great system of

jurisprudence![19] When a conflict arose between the Code and the rules as laid down in the standard text-books of Muslim law the court gave effect to the Code as being part of the country's statutory law.[20] Muslim law was applied only if it was consistent with the provisions of the Code and the customary usages of the Ceylon Muslims. Recourse was had to the principles stated in the standard texts either to elucidate, but not contradict, such usages, or on questions of law, as distinguished from custom, when the Code was silent.[21]

Each of the sixty-three sections on intestate succession contains a specific hypothetical example. But in the event of there being heirs other than those mentioned in each section the Code afforded no guidance. As a good knowledge of the basic principles underlying the Islamic law of succession was rare even among the lawyers, the practice arose of obtaining the opinions of experts, who, unfortunately, too often proved unreliable. In 1912 the Supreme Court therefore decided to discontinue this practice and to consult instead the standard text-books on questions of pure law when the Code was silent.[22] The imperfections of the Code led Mr. (later Justice) M. T. Akbar to characterise it in 1919 as a calamity from the point of view of the development of Muslim law in Ceylon.[23]

As attempt had been made to argue that since the Royal Charter of Justice of February 1833 repealed that of 1801, and Ordinance 5 of 1835 repealed the Proclamation of 1799 except in so far as it provided that the administration of justice should be according to the laws that subsisted under the Dutch, the Roman-Dutch law of intestate succession, and not Muslim law, should be applied when the Code was silent. But this contention was rejected inasmuch as the Muslim law of succession had in fact been applied to the Muslims by the Dutch, and continued to be in force by virtue of the guarantee contained in the 1799 Proclamation, re-enacted in 1835.[24] The Muslim law of succession was saved, again, by virtue of section 2 of the Matrimonial Rights and Inheritance Ordinance No. 15 of 1876.

4. REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGES, KADUTTAM

Under Muslim law a valid marriage is constituted by declaration **(ijab)** and acceptance **(qabul)**, with the proper stipulation of dower **(mahr)** payable to the bride, in the presence of two competent witnesses. Section 73 of the Code also required the priest **(lebbe)** and 'commandant' to record all transactions relating to the marriage, particularly the **mahr**, referred to in the Code as 'Magger' or 'Maskawien.' This is no doubt a recognition of the **kaduttam**,[25] which from time immemorial had been maintained as a matter of custom by the **lebbes** in every part of the Island to serve as a marriage register, deed of **mahr** and dowry and, if the occasion arose, to record the fact of divorce (Cf. Section 75). It was usually entered by the **lebbe** in Arabic-Tamil in the presence of the witnesses on the occasion of the marriage. The custom is in line with the injunction of the Quran to reduce obligations to writing: 'Be not averse to writing down the contract whether it be small or great, with its term: that is more equitable in the sight of God, more upright for testimony, and likelier that you will not be in doubt'. (2:282).

In the early British period it was the practice to enter the original **kaduttams** in a public book kept by the Government Agent. The discontinuance of this practice opened the way to irregularities committed by the **lebbes** at the instance of interested parties. Nevertheless it was, as the Government Agent of the North-Central Province reported in 1885, a 'system which, however open to abuse, has answered its purpose remarkably well on the whole, and has been the means of preserving the Mohammedans from much social strife and disorder connected with questions of inheritance and succession.'

Regulation 9 of 1822 which had attempted to introduce as a part, not merely of the evidence, but of the constitution of marriage, a stringent system of official registration was disregarded by the Muslims as well as the other communities. By Ordinance No. 6 of 1847, and the Proclamation of 18 December, 1849, this requirement was formally withdrawn and it became possible to prove Muslim marriages by any legal evidence,[26] such as the **kaduttam** or the oral testimony of witnesses to the ceremony.

The subject of registration was brought forward again in 1883 by G. E. Worthington, Registrar-General, and eventually a bill was passed[27] making offical registration not merely the best proof of marriage, but the test of its validity. Due to widespread opposition by the community, this piece of legislation – the Mohammedan Marriage Registration Ordinance No. 8 of 1886 – was not promulgated till it was amended by Ordinance No. 2 of

1888, so as to make registration optional, being the best evidence but not the sole proof of marriage. The Ordinance extended 'to the whole Island, and so far only as regards subjects of Her Majesty professing the Mohammedan faith', and repealed so much of the 1806 Code as was inconsistent with its provisions. **Levvais** (or **lebbes**) and other suitable Muslims were appointed to act as registrars of marriages, functioning under the Registrar-General's supervision. In actual practice, however, in many areas marriages continued to be contracted without the intervention of the registrar, though the **kaduttam** was usually maintained. The Ordinance was more readily availed of in the Districts of Jaffna, Puttalam, Negombo, Galle, Colombo and Kandy.

The principal Ordinance of 1886 was again amended by Ordinance No. 20 of 1910, by the insertion of section 24 which made it a punishable offence to have carnal relationships within certain specified degrees. It provided that nothing in the section should be construed to make valid a marriage which would otherwise be invalid as being within the list of prohibited relationships 'according to the Mohammedan law in force in Ceylon.' Further amendments were made by Ordinance Nos. 5 of 1918, and 9 of 1922.

5. LATE 19TH CENTURY FERMENT

The obsolete character of the 1806 Code and its unsuitability to the needs of the generation were brought forcibly to the attention of the community in 1871 by a judgement of Mr. Gillman, District Judge of Galle, who decided that a lawful divorce could be obtained by a Muslim outside its ambit.[28] This led to the introduction of a motion in the Legislative Council by Mutu Coomaraswamy, at the instance of the 'learned priests and intelligent Mohammedans in Colombo led by Mr. Abdul Rahman' and the 'leading priests, Alims and landowners of Kalutara'.[29] The request was that the opinion of the legal and judicial officers of the Crown should be taken on the Code with a view to replacing it with a comprehensive enactment introducing the Muslim law relating to marriages, divorces, gifts, guardianship and custody of children (and also providing for the registration of marriages by **lebbes**, placed under the Registrar-General). But the Government was somewhat reluctant to disturb the **status quo**, partly to avoid exposing itself to the criticism of interfering in religious laws and customs. In 1872 M.C. Abdul Rahman himself took the initiative to submit a revised code which was circulated by the Queen's Advocate among the Government Agents to ascertain the views of the leading Muslims in their Provinces. In 1875 the draft of a proposed Mohammedan Law Ordinance was prepared, chiefly at the instance of Sir Charles Layard,

Government Agent of the Western Province, and published for general information; it contained an amended version of the 1806 Code besides provision for the formal registration of marriages and divorces. It was not, however, enacted into law.[30]

6. AKBAR REPORTS 1928

We now come to an important landmark in the development of Muslim law in Sri Lanka. The Supreme Court decision in **The King** v **Miskin Umma**[31] was followed in 1926 by the introduction of a motion in the Legislative Council by N. H. M. Abdul Cader for the appointment of a Select Committee of the House to consider and report on the Muslim law of marriages. The Committee was composed of M. T. Akbar (Acting Attorney General, Chairman), N. H. M. Abdul Cader, K. Balasingham, W. Duraisamy, T. B. Jayah, C. W. W. Kannangara, H. M. Macan-Markar, A. F. Molamure and E. R. Tambimuttu. It was later asked to make a separate report on the law applicable to Muslims in respect of donations, **fideicommissa** and inheritance. The Committee heard the views of the Muslim public and submitted in 1928 two reports containing its recommendations, with appropriate draft ordinances.[32]

One of the chief recommendations of the Select Committee was the institution of the office of Kathi or Muslim judge to hear matrimonial actions, which was urged strongly as follows:[33]

> 'The defects in the Muslim law of divorces in Ceylon have been due to the disappearance under the British administration of the office of Kathi . . . . Such an official is required to interfere in disputes between husband and wife at the request of either of them and to influence them towards an amicable settlement . . . [A] Kathi should be appointed for each Muslim area for the purpose of making his influence felt and exercising a limited right of veto in cases of divorces effected by Muslim husbands . . . [T]he office of Kathi has been instituted in the Straits Settlements.
>
> The Kathi can also play a very important part in cases of divorces by Muslim wives. Under the Shafii law an aggrieved Muslim wife has to go before a Judge before she can get a divorce . . . [T]he Kathi can in a great majority of cases interfere to effect a reconciliation between husband and wife . . . What happens under the existing practice is that as soon as the wife sues for non-maintenance, the husband divorces her, and it ends in the misery and ruin of the children of the union . . . [T]he husband should be allowed to divorce his wife only after giving three notices to the Kathi at intervals . . . [T]he Kathi should in the meantime use his best endeavours, with the help of the relatives on both sides, to effect a recon-

ciliation between husband and wife and to prevent the divorce. This is in accord with the spirit of the Muslim Law. . . .

[T]he Kathi should be empowered to inquire into and to decree a monthly maintenance, not only for the maintenance of the deserted wife, but also of the children . . . [H]e should be empowered to recover it by sending a certificate to the local Police Magistrate, who should then recover such maintenance as if it were a fine . . . This would prevent the necessity of Muslim women attending the Police Court, and it would also prevent many divorces from taking place.

. . . For want of this functionary a grave abuse has crept into the Muslim law and a custom was gradually being evolved, as indicated in the Supreme Court judgement reported in the New Law Reports, whereby a Muslim wife could in fact divorce her husband at her pleasure through the medium of her own agent. This led to an intolerable situation in Ceylon. It was finally decided by the Supreme Court that such divorces were absolutely invalid, and the Supreme Court indicated that in future divorces should only be allowed if the wife brought a case for divorce in the District Court. But the institution of such petty cases in the District Court is unthinkable, because in the great majority of cases wives deserted by their husbands cannot afford to pay the stamp fees and the Proctor's fees. Many of these cases also end in the reconciliation of husband and wife, the divorce proceedings being instituted by the wife generally for the purpose of bringing her husband to reason, and it is in such cases that the Kathi will be most useful . . .

The Committee feels strongly that unless Kathis are appointed as recommended by them the whole Muslim law of marriages and divorce is bound to end in failure and to lead to the thorough demoralization of the private life of the Muslim people of Ceylon.'

The Committee also proposed that the registration of marriages and divorces should be made compulsory and that a penalty should attach to non-registration, as it felt that 'a great deal of abuses which have crept into the Muslim law of marriages is due to the fact that registration was made optional in Ordinance No. 8 of 1886.' But a marriage or divorce valid or invalid according to the Muslim law was not to be rendered invalid or valid merely by reason of non-registration or registration.

7. MUSLIM MARRIAGES AND DIVORCE REGISTRATION ORDINANCE 1929

Ordinance No. 27 of 1929[34] embodied the Akbar committee's proposals, and it repealed Ordinance No. 8 of 1886. Before the Ordinance was promulgated on 1 January 1937, it was amended by Ordinance No. 9 of 1934 in accordance with the recommendation made by a committee appointed in 1930.[35]

The Ordinance applied 'only to subjects of His Majesty professing Islam' (s. 1(2)). While repealing sections 64 to 102 (First paragraph) of the Code of 1806, section 50 saved 'the Muslim law of marriage and divorce, and the rights of Muslims thereunder,'[36] which was subsequently understood by the courts to mean the rights under the Muslim law of the sect to which the person concerned belonged.[37] This had the important effect of introducing with statutory sanction the pure Muslim law of marriage and divorce irrespective of local custom. The Ordinance thus altered the basic position delineated as follows by Schneider, A. J., in 1916, although the Privy Council has since pointed out that his view represented 'too narrow a limitation' of the relevance of treatises on Muslim law when the provisions of the Code were in force:

> 'The reported cases show that since 1862 A.D. our Courts have consistently followed the principle that the Muhammadan law which prevails in Ceylon is so much and no more of Muhammadan law as has received the sanction of custom in Ceylon . . . It is true that treatises on the Muhammadan law generally are frequently referred to in our Courts. But this is done only to elucidate some obscure text in our written Muhammadan law, or in corroboration of evidence of local custom. I cannot find a single decision that has gone to the length of holding that, apart from the prevalence of a local custom, Muhammadan law has any application in Ceylon. On the contrary, there is authority to the effect that where there is a conflict between the Muhammadan law as found in the treatises and local custom, the latter should be followed.'[38]

The Ordinance empowered the Governor (later the Minister) to appoint 'any Male Muslim of good character and position and of suitable attainments to be a Kathi,' and provided for the licensing of 'officiating priests' to register marriages and divorces. An initial request that Kathis be appointed exclusively from among traditionally trained theologians **(Ulema)** was not conceded. The actual policy that generally guided the appointments is contained in a minute made in 1936 by J. C. W. Rock, Registrar- General. 'The essential qualification of a Kathi,' he said, 'is not a theoretical knowledge of Muslim theology and law, but experience,

intelligence and a knowledge of Muslim customs prevailing in this country. He should have a good grasp of facts and be able to conduct an inquiry on correct lines of procedure. He should be in a position to reconcile parties and adjudicate upon questions of maintenance. He should above all be a man of some status in the community with good general educational qualifications.'

8. MUSLIM MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE ACT 1951

After about eighteen months' experience of working the Ordinance it was found that extensive amendment was required, and representations were made especially by the Kathis' Association. In 1939 the Government set up a committee to go into the working of the Ordinance, consisting of the Registrar-General, (chairman **ex officio**) M. T. Akbar, T. B. Jayah, A. R. A. Razik, M. C. Abdul Cader, M. I. M. Haniffa and M. H. M. Shamsudeen. The committee's recommendations, contained in their (unpublished) report of 11 November 1941, and those of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Advisory Board, were embodied in the (currently operative) Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act No. 13 of 1951,[39] which came into operation on 1 August 1954. The Act repealed the Ordinance, but section 98 saved 'the Muslim law of marriage and divorce, and the rights of Muslims thereunder', and specifically declared that 'in all matters relating to any Muslim marriage or divorce, the status and the mutual rights and obligations of the parties shall be determined according to the Muslim law governing the sect to which the parties belong.' This latter provision reinforces the position of the law as laid down by the classical jurists of Islam, and by implication discountenances any contrary local custom by which Schneider, A. J., set so much store. Section 2 provides that the Act is applicable 'only to the marriages and divorces, and other matters connected therewith, of those inhabitants of Ceylon who are Muslims.' The Act has since been amended by Acts Nos. 31 of 1954, 22 of 1955, 1 of 1965 and 32 of 1969.

(a) REGISTRATION

The Act provides for the registration of marriages by Muslim registrars (appointed by the Registrar-General), and divorces by Quazis as they are now called (appointed by the Judicial Service Commission).[40] However, the Act, like the Ordinance, does not 'render valid or invalid, by reason only of registration or non-registration any Muslim marriage or divorce which is otherwise invalid or valid, as the case may be, according to the Muslim law governing the sect to which the parties to such marriage or

divorce belong' (s. 16). The registration entry is 'the best evidence of the marriage or divorce,' The registration of every marriage, immediately upon the conclusion of the **nikah** ceremony, is compulsory. The duty of causing it to be registered is cast on the bridegroom, the **wali** (marriage guardian) and the person conducting the ceremony, any default being a punishable offence under section 81.

The Act expressly prohibits the registration of the following classes of marriage, on pain of the penalties laid down in sections 82, 87 and 92: (i) the marriage of a Muslim woman during her period of **iddat** (s. 22); (ii) the marriage of a woman of the Shafii sect without the intervention of her rightful **wali**, unless the Quazi has under section 47 authorised the marriage and dispensed with the necessity for the **wali's** presence and approval (s. 25(2)); (iii) a marriage at which the person acting as **wali** is not entitled to so act in relation to that bride according to the law of the sect to which she belongs (s. 26 (2)); (iv) the marriage of a Muslim girl below the age of twelve years, unless the Quazi's authority has been obtained for the registration (s. 23); and (v) the second or subsequent marriage of a married male Muslim, unless he has given a month's prior notice to the Quazi (s. 24(4)). Under the Shafii rules marriages belonging to categories (i), (ii) and (iii) are, in any event, invalid. Further, it may be noted that section 80 re-enacts the classes of relationship, by consanguinity or affinity, within which marriage is prohibited, and therefore invalid, in Muslim law; but the penalty for the violation of the prohibition is made more stringent than under the Ordinance.

(b) WALI

Section 25 (1) declares the Shafii rule in terms that require the **wali's** presence and approval (unless the Quazi has given the dispensation under section 47), and the bride's own consent to the marriage, as conditions precedent to the validity of all marriage contracts without exception. While displacing the erroneous view of the Shafii rule expressed earlier in certain decisions,[41] that a non-virgin bride of that sect may validly enter into a marriage contract without the **wali's** intervention, this provision represents a statutory modification of the Shafii rule, which had been recognised by the Board of Kathis,[42] that strictly speaking a father may, even without her consent, dispose of the hand of his virgin daughter. The section in effect embodies as a positive requirement the recommendation of the Shafii jurists that it is always desirable to consult even a virgin daughter in regard to her future husband. According to the Shafii school, a father is not entitled to give away his non-virgin daughter without her consent,[43] and where the **wali** is not the father the consent of the virgin too is always necessary.[44]

(c) POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGE

Section 24 seeks to regulate polygamous marriage by male Muslims.[45] A married male Muslim who intends to contract another marriage is required to give notice of his intention to the Quazi at least thirty days earlier; and before he issues the certificate of the receipt of such notice, without which the marriage cannot be registered, the Quazi should notify the existing wife and the proposed subsequent wife as well as exhibit the information at all the **jumma** mosques in his area. In its report the Committee appointed in 1939 had urged in favour of this provision that 'it is desirable to discourage polygamy in certain cases, in order to ensure the welfare of the existing family or families of the man desiring to contract another marriage, by the force of public opinion.' Failure to notify the Quazi is an offence punishable with a fine while a registrar who registers a marriage in contravention of section 24(4) is liable, in addition, to imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding six months (ss. 82 and 92). During the five years ended 1960, not more than two to three in every thousand Muslim marriages registered were polygamous, the annual average of Muslim marriages registered during that period being 5,400.

(d) CHILD MARRIAGE

The Act also introduced, for the first time, measures intended to discourage female child marriages among Muslims.[46] Although the Muslim law does not prescribe a minimum age of marriage,[47] section 23 provides that a marriage of a Muslim girl who is below twelve years of age shall not be registered unless the Quazi has authorized the registration. A registrar who knowingly violates this prohibition, or any person who aids or abets him, commits a punishable offence under section 82. The power of the Quazi to adjudicate upon a request for authority to register a child marriage derives from section 47 (1)(j); and under rule 3 of the Fourth Schedule he is required to make such order 'as to him may seem just', after holding under section 23 'such inquiry as he may deem necessary.' Under the Penal Code a man commits the offence of rape if he has sexual intercourse with a girl below twelve years of age even if she is his wife and irrespective of her consent.[48] According to the Muslim law, 'where a father disposes of his daughter's hand during her minority (i.e. before puberty) she cannot be delivered to her husband before she attains puberty,'[49] and in default of evidence, 'the age of puberty is fixed by law for both sexes at fifteen years completed.[50] The broad discretion vested in the Quazi by the Act has acted as a brake on child marriages, but they have not been altogether eliminated in the rural districts of the Island. During the three years ended

1957 twelve marriages of girls below twelve years were registered, the youngest of them being ten.[51]

(e) QUAZI'S POWERS

Section 47 vests in the Quazi the powers, which the Kathi had under section 21 of the Ordinance, to inquire into and adjudicate upon applications for the recovery of **mahr**; for maintenance by or on behalf of a wife or child;[52] for maintenance of a divorced wife until the registration of the divorce or during her period of **iddat**, or if pregnant, until the delivery of the child; for lying-in-expenses; for the increase or reduction of any maintenance previously ordered; and for authority to register a marriage where the woman has no **wali** or where her **wali** unreasonably withholds his consent to the marriage. Section 47 removes the upper limits placed on the amounts of **mahr** (Rs. 1,000) and maintenance (Rs. 100 for the wife and Rs. 50 for each child), which could be claimed in the Kathi's court under the Ordinance, and conferred on the Quazi powers to adjudicate upon claims for **kaikuli**,[53] applications for declaration of nullity of marriage by either spouse, for mediation between the spouses, and for authority to register the marriage of a girl below twelve years. Section 48 gives the Quazi jurisdiction, unlimited as regards amounts, in respect of all matters specified in section 47, as it was thought that parties should not be in a position to select the court to which they could carry their cases, and that the existence of any concurrent jurisdiction with the Magistrate would militate against the effective working of the Act.[54] The Fourth Schedule contains the rules that govern inquiries under section 47; and rule 3 requires the Quazi to make such order 'as to him may seem just.'

(f) DIVORCE BY HUSBAND (TALAK)

Where a husband desires to divorce his wife, section 27 of the Act requires the rules in the Second Schedule to be followed. He should give notice of his intention to the Quazi of her area, who would then attempt to effect a reconciliation 'with the help of the relatives of the parties and of the elders and other influential Muslims in the area.' Thirty days after the initial notice, if there has meanwhile been no reconciliation, the husband may appear before the Quazi and utter **talak** in the presence of two witnesses. This is recorded by the Quazi and the wife notified if she was not present. Upon the lapse of a further period of thirty days, if the husband was still not reconcilied with his wife, he should reappear before the Quazi and have such non-reconciliation recorded. After yet another thirty days, if he still persisted in his intention to divorce his wife, he would finally appear and have his divorce registered by the Quazi. This

procedure provides adequate opportunities for reconciliation. Rule 3 states that the Quazi 'shall not record the alleged reasons for which, or the alleged grounds upon which, the husband seeks to pronounce the **talak**.' He is required, however, to recover from the husband any unpaid **mahr** due to the wife. Extra-judicial pronouncement of **talak** without recourse to the statutory procedure is an offence punishable by a fine under section 92, although it is nonetheless a valid divorce because the Act 'does not', as the Board of Kathis had said of the Ordinance, 'in the least abrogate the Muslim law of marriage and divorce but it only provides a procedure for the **hasan** type of **talaq**.'[55]

(g) DIVORCE BY WIFE (FASAH ETC.)

Section 28 provides for divorce at the instance of the wife. Unlike the Ordinance,[56] it vests in the Quazi comprehensive jurisdiction to hear and adjudicate upon a wife's application for divorce on all grounds known to the Muslim law of the sect to which the parties belong. The Third Schedule sets out the procedure that must be adopted where a wife desires, under section 28, a divorce from her husband (a) 'without his consent on the ground of ill-treatment or on account of any act or omission on his part which amounts of a "fault" under the Muslim law governing the sect to which the parties belong'; under the Shafii rules, this would include his cruelty, desertion and failure to maintain (The Ordinance had, by its definition of **fasah** by reference to the husband's 'fault', confined the Kathi's jurisdiction to this class of grounds);[57] and (b) on any other ground, 'being a divorce of any description permitted to a wife by the Muslim law governing the sect to which the parties belong'; for the Shafiis, this would include **fasah** divorce on grounds such as the husband's impotence, insanity, leprosy or other dire disease, his inability to maintain (as distinguished from mere unwillingness), and lack of **Kafa' a**,[57a] and other forms of divorce such as **mubara'at**, **khula**,[58] **talak-i-tafweez** and **khiyar-ul-bulugh**. The Quazi, assisted by three Muslim assessors, is required to endeavour to bring the parties to an amicable settlement before hearing the application. If he fails, he should record the evidence of witnesses. The wife must produce at least two witnesses. After hearing the opinions of the assessors, which however are not binding on him, the Quazi is required 'to make such order on the application as may properly be made under the Muslim law governing the sect to which the parties belong.'

The available statistics show that among Muslims divorce at the wife's instance has tended to be rather more frequent than **talak** divorce; the respective percentages for the six years ended 1961 were 56 and 44,

though in 1966 the difference was only 1%. About 15% of the marriages end in divorce. In 1966 the average duration (i.e. actual cohabitation) of the dissolved marriages was just over 4 years, and nearly 18% of these marriages lasted less than a year.[59]

(h) LEGAL REPRESENTATION

The Ordinance of 1929 had been silent on the question of the legal representation of parties before the Kathis, but in practice lawyers did sometimes appear with their permission. The Board of Kathis, with one member dissenting, observed in April 1954, that in their experience the result of non-representation was that 'the case was not properly adjudicated, the issues in the case were not properly framed, inadmissible and irrelevant evidence was admitted, the procedure was not strictly followed, and even the law was misapplied.'[60] The committee that reported in 1941 had, however, considered that 'the retention of lawyers is expensive, delays the disposal of cases, and frequently prevents reconciliation between the husband and wife, and if only one party is represented by a lawyer that party's case tends to be overweighted. The appearance of lawyers before the Board of Quazis is not open to the same objection.' Accordingly, the Act specifically excluded the appearance of advocates and proctors before the Quazis, but provided that the prohibition would not apply to proceedings before the Board (s. 74).

(i) BOARD OF QUAZIS

Under the Act, as under the Ordinance, the five members of the Board, as well as the Quazis, are appointed from among 'male Muslims who are of good character and position and of suitable attainments.' From the inception the membership of the Board has in general been drawn from the legal profession, and among the four exceptions two were former members of the legislature. (A proposed amendment to be enacted shortly requires that appointments to the Board be confined to Attorneys-at-Law). Of the 44 Quazis in service in 1972, 17 were proctors while the others were laymen with the exception of two who were of the **ulema**; the pattern remains the same today. As 'matters under the Act No. 13 of 1951 are governed by the Evidence Ordinance except where the Act expressly provides and the rules of evidence prescribed by Muslim law have no application',[60a] the appointment of persons trained in the law is amply justified at both levels.

The main function of the Board is to hear appeals from the decisions of Quazis in inquiries under section 47 and on applications for divorce at the wife's instance under section 28 (s.60). The Act provides for further appeal to the Supreme Court with its leave from the Board's orders. The rules governing appeals are laid down in the Fifth Schedule.

Under the Ordinance the Board's powers had been confined to hearing appeals. The Act gives them additional powers, such as the examination of the record of any proceedings including pending cases before a Quazi, for legality and propriety of any order made and the regularity of the proceedings, and making orders in revision (ss.43 and 44); and casts on them the duty to advise the Registrar-General and the Quazis on questions of Muslim law referred to them (ss.45 and 46). The Quazi is bound by the opinion of the Board.

(j) ADVISORY BOARD

The Act establishes a Muslim Marriage and Divorce Advisory Board consisting of not lesss than four nor more than nine Muslims nominated by the Minister, and its function is to advise the Registrar-General, who is the chairman, in regard to the administration of the Act (ss.4–7). The Board that had functioned earlier was a non-statutory body.

9. UNIFORM MARRIAGE LAW

In 1956 a thirteen-member Commission to consider the marriage and divorce laws of the country was appointed and its Report,[61] published three years later, contained a recommendation that a uniform law of marriage and divorce should be made applicable to all persons throughout the Island, and that a Muslim should have the option of utilising as his discretion either the general law or his special laws. The Muslim member of the Commission, Al-Haj M.I.M. Haniffa, disagreed with his colleagues, and expressed the view that a Muslim should be able to marry under the proposed uniform law, as in the general law at present, only when he or she married a non-Muslim, and that the option of marrying under this law should not be available where both parties to the marriage are Muslims, as the Muslim law was a religious law.

10. CUSTODY OF MINORS: AGE OF MAJORITY

Before coming to the legislative developments that followed the recommendations of the Akbar committee's final report of 1928, we must

note two matters in respect of which the Muslim law has been recognised by the Courts. In the first place, as regards the custody of Muslim minors,[62] the **cursus curiae** in Sri Lanka has been to recognise the superior right accorded by Muslim law to the mother and the maternal grandmother in preference to the claims of the father. In the second place, section 3 of the Age of Majority Ordinance No. 7 of 1865 fixes twenty-one as the legal age of majority for all persons, provided that any person under that age may attain majority 'by operation of law.' The Privy Council has held that for the purpose of marriage a Muslim in Sri Lanka attains majority on reaching puberty, in accordance with Muslim law.[63] Even as regards the general legal capacity to do other acts, such as disposing of property or entering into binding contracts, Gratiaen, J. held in **Assanar** v. **Hamid**[64] that the tule of Muslim law would apply in view of the definition of the scope of section 3 in the Full Bench decision of **Muttiah Chetty** v. **Dingiria**.[65]

11. INFLUENCE ON TESAVALAMAI

Further, though the Muslim law governing the sale of property is not applied by the Courts to the Muslims,[66] the view has been advanced that its rule of pre-emption was adopted by the **Tesavalamai**, the customary law of the Tamils of Jaffna. Wijeyewardene, J., attributed the reception to what he called 'the early occupation of North Ceylon for a time by Mahomedans or the later occupation by the Malabars who had themselves come under Mahomedan influence in India,' where pre-emption 'owes its origin entirely to Mahomedan Law.'[67] K. Balasingham had adduced evidence in support of this theory, while Tambiah, J., and J.D.M. Derrett have suggested a different view.[68] It is, however, in reliance on the theory, that the Courts in Sri Lanka have derived assistance not only from the Roman-Dutch Law but also Muslim Law in deciding questions of pre-emption under the **Tesavalamai**.[69]

12. MUSLIM INTESTATE SUCCESSION AND WAKFS ORDINANCE 1931

(a) INTESTACY

Now to return to the Akbar committee, on the basis of the draft embodied in its final report the Muslim Intestate Succession and Wakfs Ordinance No. 10 of 1931 was enacted.[70] It declared that the law applicable to the intestacy of any deceased Muslim who at the time of his death was domiciled in Sri Lanka or was the owner of immovable property in Sri Lanka

shall be the Muslim law governing the sect to which he belonged. This Ordinance repealed the First Title of the 1806 Code, whose provisions, though based on the Shafii rules, were nevertheless uniformly applicable to all Muslims irrespective of the sect or school of law to which they belonged. As the committee had put it: 'The rules governing intestacy are quite clear and there is no necessity to keep alive the various examples given in the Chapter on Inheritance in the Mahomedan Law Ordinance of 1806.'

(b) TESTATE SUCCESSION

As regards testate succession, the committee's recommendation to introduce the limitation imposed by Muslim law on the testamentary power to one-third of one's assets was not implemented; so that a Muslim retains the right to utilise the Wills Ordinance No. 21 of 1844 to give away all his property according to his own wishes, even to persons other than his heirs at Muslim law.[71]

(c) GIFTS

The Ordinance No.10 of 1931 removed the judicial uncertainties[72] that had arisen about the law governing gifts made by Muslims. It provides that the law applicable to pure donations made by Muslims domiciled or owning immovable property in Sri Lanka shall be the law governing the sect to which the donor belongs. But if the donation involved **fideicommissa,** usufructs or trusts the Roman-Dutch law will apply. Though in Muslim law certain classes of gifts are irrevocable, under the proviso to section 3 this rule will not apply unless it is so stated in the deed. The Muslim law is also modified by the provision recognising the delivery of the deed as good evidence of the delivery of possession of the movable or immovable property gifted.

(d) WAKFS

The Akbar committee's suggestions designed to secure a strict control of religious charitable trusts or wakfs were based mainly on the Religious Endowment Act of India. Till the Ordinance No. 10 of 1931 was enacted, a person interested in ensuring the proper administration of mosque properties and other **wakfs** had to take the initiative to secure the good offices of the Government Agent of the area or to have recourse to the District Court,[73] though the position had been somewhat improved by the Trusts Ordinance No. 9 of 1917. However, it was realized that in the absence of a central authority to administer its provisions chapter II

of the Ordinance of 1931 dealing with **wakfs** could not be worked satisfactorily; and a committee appointed in February 1933 to secure the effective working of the Ordinance recommended that such an authority should be set up. 'It should be.' they said in their Report, 'a highly placed government official and we also consider it imperative that he should be assisted by an Advisory Board of five members analogous to that established under the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance. The members of the Advisory Board should be Muslims.'[74] Subsequently a draft bill was prepared by a committee, of which M.T. Akbar was chairman, and published in 1943.[75] It provided for the registration and supervision of mosque properties by the Public Trustee, assisted by an Advisory Board of seven Muslim members, of which he would be chairman **ex officio.** The merely advisory role envisaged for the Board did not find favour with orthodox opinion in the Muslim community, and the Government for its part was reluctant to concede the demand for an Executive Board of Muslim members, presided over by the Public Trustee who would merely carry out its decisions.

13. MOSQUES AND CHARITABLE TRUSTS OR WAKFS ACT 1956

After Independence in 1948, the agitation was revived by the Muslims, and a committee comprising all Muslim Senators and Members of Parliament was asked by the Government to receive representations and examine the issue afresh. On the basis this committee's recommendations Act No. 51 of 1956[76] was passed, repealing chapter II of the Ordinance of 1931. The Act has since been amended by Act No. 21 of 1962 and Act No. 33 of 1982. Basically, the Act provides for the registration of mosques, Muslim shrines and places of religious resort; prescribes the powers, duties and functions of their trustees and the trustees of Muslim charitable trusts or **wakfs;** and establishes a Muslim Charities Fund.

The Act of 1956 resolved the vexed question of the status of the Board and its chairman, and their mutual relationship by providing for an executive rather than merely advisory body of seven Muslim members appointed by the Minister, and presided over by a Commissioner for Mosques and Muslim Charitable Trusts or Wakfs. The Commissioner and his Deputy were both public servants and only Muslims were eligible to be appointed (s.2). The 1982 amendment re-designates the office of Commissioner as Director; and he no longer presides over the Board, this function being now assigned to one of the seven members, who is appointed by the Minister (now, specifically, of Muslim Affairs) as Chairman of the Board

(s. 5(3) and s. 5(8). The Board may, however, still delegate its powers, duties or functions to the Director (s.9A). In 1982 was also instituted the Wakfs Tribunal composed of three Muslims appointed by the Judicial Service Commission, and in it were vested exclusively and without appeal nearly all the powers which the District Court had had, under section 39, to hear and determine applications to enforce the provisions of a Muslim charitable trust or **wakf**, etc. (ss.9D, 9E and 9J). In settling a scheme for the management of any such trust or **wakf**, or in determining any question relating to its constitution, existence or administration or the devolution of the trusteeship, the Tribunal shall have regard, **inter alia**, to the religious law and custom of the sect of the Muslim community concerned and the relevant local custom (s.41). In respect of mosques, the Board must similarly have regard to such criteria in appointing trustees in whom all the property and income of the mosque are vested (s.14). The phraseology of section 20 prohibiting the mortgage, sale or other alienation of the mosque's immovable property vested in trustees except with the Board's approval, and that of section 22 allowing leases thereof albeit with the Board's prior approval, reflects the distinctions made in the Islamic law of **wakf**. The Islamic prohibition on riba (usury) is embodied in the rule against investing the monies of the mosque of the Charities Fund so as to earn interest (ss.19(1) and 44).

The trustees of Muslim charitable trusts or **wakfs** not created solely for the benefit of mosques are made accountable to the Board under Part V; it applies to such trusts or **wakfs** created: (a) for the relief of poverty among Muslims; (b) the advancement of the education of Muslims or any section thereof; (c) the advancement of the religion generally; (d) the management of any mosque etc. or the performance of religious rites or practices; (e) any purpose beneficial to Muslims or any section thereof; and (f) by an amendment introduced in 1962, any other purpose recognised by Muslim law as religious, pious or charitable (s. 32; cf. Trusts Ordinance, s. 99). The inclusion of this last category has the effect of extending the accountability envisaged in Part V not only to **wakf khayri** – where the settlor withdraws from circulation the substance of his property **(ayn)** and spends the proceeds **(manfaa)** for a charitable purpose, **with immediate effect**, but also to **wakf dhurri** or family wakf -- where the **wakf** is designed primarily for the benefit of the settlor's descendants, or indeed even strangers, with the reservation only of an **ultimate** benefit for a charitable purpose, though under the classical Shafii principles no such reservation is necessary, the usufruct being diverted to the poor generally in the absence of any relatives of the settlor. The 1962 amend-

ment would, it is submitted, make it impossible for the Sri Lanka courts to follow the Privy Council's regrettable practice in the days before Kenya's independence when it considered itself bound by the case-law of India prior to the Musalman Wakf Validating Act of 1913 – thus following its own discredited **Abu Fata** case.[77]

FOOTNOTES

1. S. M. Yusuf, in the **History of Ceylon,** (University of Ceylon), vol. I, part II, p. 705. CF. **A Short History of Hind-Pakistan** (Pakistain Historical Society, Karachi), p.98; S.A. Imam, 'Ceylon-Arab Relations', in **The First Twenty-One Years,** M.I.C.H. (1965), p.10.

2. Ibn Battuta, **Travels in Asia and Africa** (1325-1354), ed. Gibb, 1929, pp. 95, 256, 260.

3. Tennent, **Ceylon,** I, pp. 597-98.

4. **Ceylon Historical Journal,** III, No. 2, p. 141.

5. S. G. Perera, **History of Ceylon for Schools,** Vol. I, 1947, p. 9. Cf. Alexander Johnston's letter to the Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, **Transactions, R. A. S. (G.B. and Irel)** vol. i, p. 537 et. seq.

6. 'Moors' or 'Maurs' is the generic term by which the Muslims were known to the people of the Iberian Peninsula, deriving from 'Mauretania', situated across the Straits of Gibraltar. The Portuguese, after the fall of Muslim rule in the Peninsula and their discovery of the passage to the East round the Cape of Good Hope, gave the appellation to the Arabs and their descendants whom they found established as traders in every part of the Afro-Asian coast in the 16th century. In Sri Lanka name gained official currency with the successive colonial regimes. See Professor T. Nadaraja, **J.C.B.R.A.S.,** vol. XII (New series), 1968, nn. 23 and 24 at pp. 27-8; **Ceylon at the Census of 1911,** pp. 232-7; the **Report of the Census of Ceylon, 1921,** vol. 1 part 1, pp. 209; and Dr. K. W. Goonewardena, 'Some Notes on the History of the Muslims in Ceylon before the British Occupation,' in **University Majlis,** (Peradeniya), vol. IX, 1959-60, p. 82.

7. Plural of 'Alim', one possessed of 'ilm' or knowledge. Cf. 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge.' **Quran** 20: 114. See 26:197, 29:43, 35:28, 3:6, 26:197, 35:28.

8. Alexander Johnston Papers on Ceylon Native Laws and Customs, C. O. 54/123-4.

9. **Mangandi Umma** v, **Lebbe Marikar** (1906) 10 N.L.R. 1; **Rabia Umma** v, **Saibu** (1914) 17 N.L.R. 338; **Khan** v. **Marikar** (1913) 16 N.L.R. 425; and **Mohamedu Cassim** v. **Cassie Lebbe** (1927) 29 N.L.R. 136. The statement in para 19. at p. 185 of Sessional Paper XVI of 1959 that 'the majority of the Ceylon Muslims belong to the latter' (i.e., Shiah) sect is an obvious error; the only Shiites in Sri Lanka are the small community of Gujerati - speaking Bohras. See also Dr. Ahmad bin Mohd. Ibrahim, 'Shafi Law in the Indian Courts', in **Islamic Culture** (Hyderabad), Vol. XXXIX, No. 2 (1965), p. 251.

10. N. J. Coulson, **A History of Islamic Law** (1964), p. 55; see also art. 'Shafii,' **The Encyclopaedia Britannica** vol. 20 (1966).

11. H. A. R. Gibb, **Mohammedanism An Historical Survey** (Mentor, 1955).

12. S. A. Imam, **Op. cit.**, p. 13.

13. J. Ribeiro, **Fatalidade Historica da Ilha de Ceilao**, trans. Paul E. Pieris, 2nd ed., pp. 192, 194; Dr. K. W. Goonewardena, **op. cit.**, pp. 85-89.

14. See his letter of November, 1807, to the Governor, Schedule of C. O. 54/124.

15. For the Code see, generally, Professor. T. Nadaraja, **The Legal System of Ceylon in its Historical Setting** (Leiden 1972), p. 14 and nn. 217-224; and pp. 182-3, 185-6 and nn. 30-41, 69, 76, 85-106.

16. **Mohideen** v. **Sulaiman** (1957) 59 N.L.R. 227.

16a. **Campbell** v. **Hall** (1774) Cowper, Rep. i, 204.

17. T. Nadaraja, **Op. cit.**, n. 31 at pp. 193-4. For the Code see the **Collection of the Legislative Acts of the Ceylon Govt, 1796-1871**, vol. 1, pp. 93-99.

18. **Saiboo Tamby** v. **Ahamat** (1851) Ramanathan, 163. In 1849, **deega** marriages by the Muslims of Kandy were recognised. (D.C. Kandy, 18794-Austin's Rep. p. 99) See also F. Modder, **The Principles of Kandyan Law**, 2nd ed. pp. 26 and 36, For Kandyan law vis-a-vis the Moors see Balasingham, **Laws of Ceylon**, 1, pp. 187 and 188.

19. **King** v. **Miskin Umma** (1925) 26 N.L.R. 330.

20. **Bandirala** v. **Natchiya** (1902) 16 N.L.R. 235.

21. **Abdul Rahiman** v. **Ussan Umma** (1916) 19 N.L.R. 178; **Narayanen** v. **Saree Umma** (1920) 21 N.L.R. 439; of Cf. Balasingham, **op.cit.**, I, p. 113 et. seq.

22. **Lebbe** v. **Thameem** (1912) 16 N.L.R. 71.

23. Ceylon Law Recorder, (1919) vol. 1, part 1, p.3.

24. Anon. (1869-71) Vanderstraaten Reports, Appendix B, p. xxxi.

25. **Hansard**, 1885-6, p. 35. 'Kaduttam', according to the Supplement to the **Madras Tamil Lexicon**, is a deed of settlement of dower among Muslims. The word derives from the Tamil 'kaditam', which means a letter or document. Sessional Paper XXII of 1885 contains the comments of the Government Agents of the several Provinces on the draft Ordinance to provide for the compulsory registration of Muslim marriages. As E. Abdulcader Lebbe, 'one of the leading Mohammedan gentlemen of Jaffna,' reported to the Government Agent, 'The protocols of Kaduttams are always written in the Tamil language, but in Arabic characters, with a slight modification of the signs thereof to suit the Tamil sounds. It is called 'Arabu-Tamil', and most of the Mohammedans can read it,'Cf. E. Tennent, **Ceylon** Vol i(1860), p. 631 n.6. For Arabic-Tamil, see Art. 'Ceylon' in Encyclopaedia of **Islam** Vol ii (Leiden, 1960). The Govt. Agents of Batticaloa and Anuradhapura, too, remarked on the Kaduttam system.

26. In the matter of the goods of **Agamadolebbe**, Ram. 1872, p. 17.

27. F. R. Saunders, Government Agent of the Western Province, supporting the principle of registration in the Legislative Council, made the following reference to Orabi Pasha, the nationalist hero of Egypt, who gave a powerful stimulus to the re-appraisal of local Muslim attitudes during his nineteen years' exile in Sri Lanka from 1883: 'I have had an interview and consultation with the Egyptian exiles at present in Ceylon, and they have informed me that the registration of marriages and divorces is in full working order in Egypt and in most Mohammedan countries. They equally think with me that if marriages are registered, so should divorces be.' **Hansard**, 1885-6, p.32. See also Sessional Papers XX and XXII of 1885, and Registrar-General's **Administration Reports** of 1883, p. 138, and of 1886, p. vi.

28. See Balasingham, op. cit., II, pp. 468-9. **Pitchi Umma v. Modely Atchy**, (1850) 3 Lorenz 261; **Rabia Umma** v. **Saibu** (1914). 17 N.L.R. at 314; **Assamuttu** v. **Mamuttu** (1865) Ram. 1863-68, p. 140.

29. **Hansard** 1871, p. 32. M.C. Abdul Rahman was the first Muslim member of the Legislative Council. He was nominated in 1889.

30. This draft code was published in the **Ceylon Government Gazette** of 24th April, 1875.

31. (1925) 26 N.L.R. 330.

32. Interim Report on the Muslim law of marriage and divorce - Sessional Paper XX of 1928, and Final Report regarding the other matters - S. P. XLIX of 1928.

33. Sessional Paper XX of 1928, pp. 3-4. The decision referred to is **King** v. **Miskin Umma** (1925) 26 N.L.R. 330. Cf. **Ageska Umma** v. **Abdul Careem** (1880) 4 S.C.C. 13. (In 1799 Gov. North had recommended the appointment of a Mufti and 'half a dozen Cazies as Judges' to be brought from the Shafii lands of S. India and Egypt. T. Nadaraja, **Op.cit.**, pp. 191-2 n. 21).

34. The regulations under the Ordinance were published in the **Gazette** No. 8256 of 3.11.36. The draft of the Ordinance was published in the **Gazettes** No. 7, 694 of 22.2.29 and No. 7, 695 of 1.3.29 with a statement of Objects and Reasons.

35. The committee was composed of P. E. Pieries (chairman), T. B. Jayah, M. C. Abdul Cader, S. M. Aboobucker, Mohd. Macan Markar, A.H.M. Ismail, M.I.M. Haniffa, and P. D. Ratnatunga. Its interim report of 21.12.33 was published as Sessional Paper IV-1934, and the draft ordinance recommended by it was published in the **Gazettes** of 12 and 19 January, 1934. The committee's earlier report of 17.12.30 and its final report of 22.1.35 were not published.

36. Ordinance No. 27 of 1929 is the first enactment in which the correct expressions 'Islam' and 'Muslim' are used instead of 'Mohammedanism' and 'Mohammedan'. The change followed the recommendation made by a committee, composed of M. T. Akbar, (Solicitor-General, chairman), N. H. M. Abdul Cader, H. M. Macan-Markar, T. B. Jayah and S. R. Mohamed Sultan, whose report was published as Sessional Paper XXXV-1924.

37. **Abdul Cader** v. **Razik** (1950) 3 M.M.D.L.R. 115; **A.H.M. Abdul Cader** v. **A. R. A. Razik** (1952) 3 M.M.D.L.R. at p. 146 (P.C.)

38. **Abdul Rahiman** V. **Ussan Umma** (1916) 19 N.L.R., at p. 184. But see **A.H.M. Abdul Cader** v. **A.R.A. Razik** (1952) 54 N.L.R., at p. 203 (P. C.). Up to 1916, reported cases involving the Muslim law of marriage had cited the following texts; against each text the number of cases in which it was cited and the year of first citation are indicated: Hedaya (8/1843), Ameer Ali (7/1890), McNaghten (3/1870), Minhaj (3/1912), Baillie (2/1890), Tyabji (2/1914), Wilson (1/1915), Raddal Mukhthar (1/1916). When the Board of Kathis commenced to function in 1937 they tended to rely on the classical Shafii texts such as the Minhaj, Kalyoobi, Badjuri, Eyana, Nihaya, Mahalli, Umaira, Ibu Cassim, Fathal Wahab, though the Hedaya, Ameer Ali, Mulla, Wilson and Tyabji were also cited. Of the Shafii texts the Minhaj alone is available in English translation and is hence more frequently cited. For other Islamic Law texts see this writer's article in (1972) 4 M.M.D.L.R. at p. 22(n.13), and Nadaraja, **Op.cit.** at p. 204(n. 96).

39. The regulations under the Act were published in the Supplement to the **Gazette** No. 10,693 of 16.7.54. for the amendments see the **Gazette** No. 14, 843 of 28.2.69.

40. There are (in November 1983) 290 registrars of Muslim marriages and 44 Quazis. These include the special registrar and special Quazi for the Bohras (since 1944), and the special Quazi for the (Hanafi) Memons (since 1960). Appointments of Quazis made by the Minister were declared **ultra vires** s.55 of the existing Constitution by the Supreme Court in **Jailabdeen** v. **Danina Umma** (1962) 64 N.L.R. 419; the position was not rectified till three years later by Acts Nos. 1 and 11 of 1965. See T. Nadaraja, **Op.cit.** p. 140 (n.30).

41. See **Rhoda Ryde** v. **Ibrahim** (1951) 3 M.M.D.L.R. 131.

42. **Yaseem** v. **Noor Naeema** (1950) 3 M.M.D.L.R. 113; **Sinnathamby Abdul Majeed** v. **Naina Mohamadu Sithie Umma** (1937) 3 M.M.D.L.R. 43.

43. **Minhaj**, p. 284. However, in **Abdul Rahuman** v. **Mohamed Yasin** (1941) 2 M.M.D.L.R., at p. 132, the Board cited Ameer Ali's view that among the Shafiis the consent of an adult virgin, too, is essential. In the Maliki country of Tunisia, girls are no longer subject to the Maliki rules of marriage guardianship (**wilayat**), which are similar to those of Shafii, since the Tunisian Code of Personal Status, 1957, adopts the Hanafi rule that all adult women have full legal capacity to conclude their own marriage contracts.

44. **M.M.I. Alim** v. **M.I.M. Mustafa** (1937) 2 M.M.D.L.R., at p. 46.

45. Polygamy existed in pre-Islamic Arabia in an unrestricted form. Islam limited the number of a man's wives to four and introduced important prescriptions to improve the lot of the woman. The Quran warned: 'If you fear you cannot do justice among wives, then marry only one' (4:3), and 'You will not be able to deal equally between wives' (4:129). The English translator of the Quran, Marmaduke Pickthall, says in his prefatory note to **sura** LXVI that, for Muslims, monogamy rather than celibacy is the ideal, and polygamy rather than monogamy the concession to human nature, and adds, 'Polygamy is of the nature of some men in all countries, and of all men in some countries..... Whether monogamy or polygamy should prevail in a particular country or period is a matter of economic and social convenience.' Shaikh Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), the great Egyptian reformer who has profoundly influenced contemporary Islamic socio-legal thought, interpreted the qualifications in Muslim law that a husband should be financially capable of supporting the wives and that he should be able to treat them impartially, not as mere moral injunctions, but as positive legal conditions precedent to the exercise of the right of polygamy, and considered that it is open to a modern court, in the light of present social circumstances, to hold that these conditions, especially the second, were incapable of fulfilment and thus refuse to sanction a second marriage. Accordingly, by an Iraqi law of 1959 the court's permission is necessary for a polygamous marriage and it has the discretion to refuse permission 'if any failure of equal treatment is feared.' By Pakistan's Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 an arbitration council, consisting of the representative of each spouse and an independent chairman, has to be satisfied that the subsequent marriage is 'just and necessary', before it grants permission 'subject to such conditions, if any, as may be deemed fit.' A Tunisian law of 1957 prohibited polygamy altogether on the ground that the circumstances of present day society make equality of treatment, to the mutual satisfaction of the spouses, in practice, impossible.

46. See **Hansard, House of Representatives**, 1950-51, vol. 9, column 1286.

47. For general and Kandyan marriages the minimum ages are fixed by law at 16 years for males and 12 years for females, except that for Europeans and Burghers the minimum female age is fixed at 14 years.

48. Cf. **M.M.I. Alim** v. **M.I.M. Mustafa** (1937) 2 M.M.D.L.R., at p. 46.

49. **Minhaj-et-Talibin**, p. 284.

50. Ibid., p. 167.

51. See H.M.Z. Farouque, 'Muslim Law in Ceylon' in (1972) 4 M.M.D.L.R. at p. 13; and the Report submitted by the Muslim Law Committee under the writer's chairmanship and published in (1978) 4 Colombo L. Rev. at pp.60-62.

52. Regarding illegitimate children, see s. 47(1) (cc) of the Act introduced as an amendment in 1965 in consequence of the restrictive interpretation placed by the Supreme Court on the Quazi's jurisdiction in **jiffrey** v. **Nona Binthan** (1960) 62 N.L.R. 256.

53. **Kaikuli**, which is defined in section 97 of the Act, is unknown to Islamic Law, and is based on local custom. The **Madras Tamil Lexicon** defines it as 'money paid by the parents of the bride to the bridegroom (Muhammedan).' The Act omits reference to another customary payment to the bridegroom unknown to Islamic Law, viz., **Stridanum**, which the marriage register under the Ordinance had provided for. A claim for its recovery is not within the Quazi's jurisdiction. For Kaikuli, see **Marshall's judgements**, pp. 221-2; Anon. (1869-71) **Vanderstraaten Rep.**, 162; **Zianabu Natchia** v. **Usuf Mohamadu** (1936) 38 N.L.R. 37; **Sowdoona** v. **Abdul Muees** (1955) 57 N. L. R. 75; **Haseena Umma** v **Hasheem** (1955) 57 N. L. R. 239; See the other cases reported in Vol. IV of M. M. D. L. R.; **Report of the Commission on Marriage and Divorce** S. P. XVI – 1959, para 351.

.54. The **obiter dictum** in **Abdul Gaffoor** v. **Joan Cuttilan** (1956) 61 N. L. R., at p. 89, that the Magistrate and Quazi have concurrent jurisdiction over applications for maintenance was made without reference to section 48, as pointed out in **M. T. M. Jiffry** v. **Nona Bintham** (1960) 62 N. L. R. 256. In the former case the Court was no doubt referring to the position under the Ordinance. See **Sooriyaumma** v. **Sathukeen** 8 C. L. W. 149, contra **Mahroof** v. **Sathul Nayima** (1951) 3 M. M. D. L. R. 183.

55. **Nansoora** v. **Sithy Jaria** (1945) 3 M. M. D. L. R. at pp. 44-45. Cf. p. 69. See ss. 16, 30, 81(b), 92 and 98 of the Act. The Second Schedule of the Act is better adapted to the **Ahsan** type of **talak**. Note the Quranic verses: 'He has ordained between spouses love and mercy' (30:21), and, 'If ye fear discord between spouses appoint an arbiter from his folk and an arbiter from her folk: for reconciliation is better than separation'. (4:35) Shaikh Muhammad Abduh interpreted the latter verse so as to deny the right of extra-judicial repudiation. His argument was briefly as follows: What more obvious instance of 'discord' than the pronouncement of repudiation (talak) by the husband? Who then more fitted to assume the necessary function of arbitration than the established courts? In short, repudiation should not be **per se** effective but should require at least the consent of the court. Implicit in this approach is the power of the court to consider the husband's motives and to give its consent upon such terms, particularly as to financial provision for the divorced wife, as it sees fit. Recent legislation in the Muslim countries has followed this interpretation, and has sought to implement as law the ethical standard

embodied in the Holy Prophet's saying, 'With God, of all things legally permissible talak is most blameworthy.'(Abu Dawud 13:3; Muhammad Ali, **Manual of Hadith**, 284, No. 1) In most Arab countries the so-called triple **talak**, considered sinful **(bidaat)** by the Hanafi jurists, where the husband repeats the pronouncement of **talak** three times on the same occasion, is no longer regarded as terminating the marriage finally; it is counted as a single and revocable divorce. The Tunisian law of 1957 renders any divorce outside a court of law devoid of legal effect. This law, like its Syrian counterpart of 1953, provides for the payment of compensation by a husband to a wife he has repudiated without just cause.

In Syria the court can award a maximum compensation of one year's maintenance and support, while in Tunisia no legal limit is fixed. (In consequence of the recommendation on **matah** in the Muslim Law Committee's Report published in (1978) 4 Colombo L. Rev. at pp. 72-3, appropriate amending legislation is to be introduced shortly). The modern jurists draw their inspiration from Quranic verses (2: 228, 229, 231, 241; 33:49; 65:2) that urge husbands both to exercise the right of talak 'with consideration' and to make 'fair provision' for the divorced women. The Quran says specifically, 'For divorced women a provision in kindness; a duty for those who ward off evil' (2: 241). These injunctions had been interpreted by the schools of law as binding only upon the conscience and not as conferring legally enforceable rights on the woman. According to the Shafii school, a consolatory gift **(matah)** to the woman is incumbent on the husband upon divorce by talak, or by judicial rescission **(fasah)**, through no fault of the woman. **Minhaj**, p. 313. Unlike our Act, Singapore's Muslims Ordinance of 1957, s. 36A, expressly empowers the Shariah Court to order its payment. However, the Shafii rule is that a wife who has been irrevocably divorced either by three **talaks** or by **khula** cannot claim maintenance during her **iddat** period from her husband, unless she is pregnant by him; but where she is divorced by three **talaks** she is entitled to a suitable lodging during her **iddat**.

56. See, H. M. Z. Farouque, 'Muslim Law in Ceylon', in 4 M.M.D.L.R. pp. 15-16.

57. **Noorul Naleefa** v. **Marikar Hajiar** (1947) 48 N.L.R. 529. The need to specify the grounds of divorce in the Act has been pointed out in a Report containing numerous other suggestions for amendment, submitted by the Muslim Law Research Committee and published in (1978) 4 Colombo L. Rev. 57.

57a. **Huraira Sawall v. Buhary Sawall** (1958) 4 M.M.D.L.R. at p 176.

58. See the different approaches of the Supreme Courts of Pakistan and Sri Lanka to **Khula** in **Khurshid Bibi** v. **Muhammad Amin** (1967) XIX PLD. 97, and **Fathima Mirza** v. **Ansar** (1971) 75 NLR 295, analysed in J. H. Marikar, 'Khula Divorce in Muslim Law' (1978) Colombo L. Rev. 105. (See also Muslim Law Committee's formulation of amendment at p. 71 of the Rev.)

59. See the **Report of the Registrar-General of Ceylon on Vital Statistics for 1966** (April, 1972). This is the last report published.

60. **Thahir** v. **Gani Noor** (1954) 4 M.M.D.L.R. 51, The only non-lawyer member of the Board, who dissented from this view, supported the exclusion of lawyers, as enacted in section 74 of Act No. 13 of 1951 which then awaited promulgation.

60a. **Juhar** v **Shariff Carrim** (1958) 4 M.M.D.L.R. at p. 172 (Board of Quazis).

61. Sessional Paper XVI of 1959. Students of Muslim law will find the followiing paragraphs of the Report of particular interest: Paras. 54-63 (towards one law); 84-9, 95, 97-101 (minimum age of marriage); 105, 121-2, 126 (prohibited degrees); 137 (nullity); 172, 176, 184, 221, 228 (grounds of divorce); 305 (procedure in matrimonial actions); 338-345, 346-50, 351-2 (signing of a Muslim marriage register by a bride, second or subsequent marriage of male Muslims, **kaikuli, mahr**).

62. See **Haji Marikar** v. **Ahamadu Lebbe** Ram. 1860-62 p. 144; **In re Nona Soja** (1930) 32 N. L. R. 63; **In re. Wappu Marikkar (1911) 14** N. L. R. 225; **Hassen** v. **Marikkar** (1953) 55 N. L. R. 190 and **Mohideen** v. **Sulaiman** (1957) 59 N. L. R. 227. But see the Application of **Sego Meera Lebbe Ahamado** (1890) 1 M. M. D. L. R., 30; **Mohamedu Cassim** v. **Cassie Lebbe** (1927) 1 M.M.D.L.R., at p. 103; **Fernando** v. **Fernando** (1932) 2 M. M. D. L. R. 1. Recent legislation in the Muslim countries places the emphasis upon the custody of minors (**hizanat**) not as a right belonging to the mother, but as a duty to be exercised in the best interests of the child, and allows the court a greater discretion in implementing the principle than the ancient jurists did. The Syrian law of 1953 recognises that the father may, in certain circumstances, be the more proper custodian of his minor children than female relatives other than the mother. The Tunisian law of 1957 and the Iraqi law of 1961 make the 'best interests of the child' the effective criterion. In Pakistan the High Court rejected, in **Bharai, v Wezir Muhammad** (1966), the strict Hanafi rule that a divorced mother forfeits her rights to custody on re-marriage.

63. **A. H. M. Abdul Cader** v. **A.R. A. Razik** (1952) 54 N. L. R. 201 (P.C.).

64. (1948) 50 N. L. R. 102. The Court dissented from the decision in **Narayanen** v. **Saree Umma** (1920) 21 N.L.R. 439.

65. (1907) 10 N.L.R. 371.

66. **Mohideen** v. **Sulaiman** (1957) 59 N.L.R. 227.

67. **Karthigesu** v. **Parupathy** (1945) 46 N.L.R. at p. 163.

68. Balasingham, **op.cit.** 1, 162-67; but see, Tambiah, (1959) 8 **Tamil Culture**; and **Ponnuthurai** v. **Sithamparapillai** (1966) 71 N.L.R. 316.

69. **Mangaleswari** v **Selvadurai** (1961) 63 N.L.R. at p. 91 (P.C.)

70. See Sessional Paper XXV of 1935 for the Report of the Committee appointed on 27.2.1933 to report on 'the steps to be taken to secure the effective working of Ordinance No. 10 of 1931', composed of P. E. Peiris (Public Trustee, Chairman), H. V. Perera, M. C. Abdul Cader, T. B. Jayah, S. N. Abubucker, A.H.M. Ismail, M.I.M. Haniffa and H. M. Macan-Markar. The Committee's recommendation to enact H. V. Perera's revised draft, embodied in its Report, in place of Chapter 1 of the Ordinance, was not implemented.

71. **Ahamat** v. **Shariffa Umma** (1931) 33 N.L.R. 8 (P.C.); **Shariffa Umma** v. **Rahamathu Umma** (1911) 14 N.L.R. 464. Before the Ordinance of 1844, the Courts gave effect to the rule of Muslim Law, See D. C. Colombo No. 51 428, Vanderstraaten 10.

72. See **Sultan** v. **Peiris** (1933) 35 N.L.R. 57; **Weerasekera v. Peiris** (1932) 34 N. L. R. 281; **Aliya Marikar Abuthahir** v. **Aliya Marikar Mohamed Sally** (1942) 43 N.L.R. 193; and **Mohideen** v. **Sulaiman** (1957) 59 N.L.R. 227.

73. See the **"Ceylon Morning Leader"** of 12.5.1908 for the Katchimale Mosque Case, and **Hansard** 1916, p.251.

74. Sessional Paper XXV of 1935, p.5. See n. 70 supra.

75. See the **Ceylon Government Gazette** (Extraordinary), No. 9, 163 of 28.8.43.

76. For constitutional aspects of the Act under the Soulbury Constitution see the **University Majlis** (1957-8) (Peradeniya), pp. 26-7. (The proper plural form of the Arabic 'Wakf' is 'aukaf').

77. (1894/5) 22 L.R. I.A. 76. The Privy Council's decision in the Kenyan case of **Fatima Binti** 1952 A.C.I. led to the enactment of the Wakf Commissioner's Ordinance of 1951 which represented the acceptance of the statutory position of India, with some improvements. Cf. D. Pearce, **A Textbook on Muslim Law** (London 1979), pp. 161-173.

XVI

MUSLIMS UNDER BRITISH RULE IN CEYLON (SRI LANKA) (1796 – 1948)

K. D. G. Wimalaratne

One hundred and fifty two years of British rule in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) i.e. from 1796 - 1948 A.D. marked an era where Ceylon as a Colony of the Second British Empire, gradually advanced to a nation of self-governing independent dominion under the British Commonwealth of Nations. In the long history of the path to independence, the various aspects of her development, viz. political, Economic, Social and Cultural advancement within a plural society was remarkable. The ruler and the ruled clearly understood that all the communities in the Colony should develop together if at all any type of freedom to be enjoyed by the people once the nation is set free by the masters who governed them for a long time.

Muslims who were a minority community under the British rule in this island, underwent a period of changes and development in their political, social, economic and cultural spheres which could be divided into **four** distinctive phases, viz; (1) Muslims as an ally of the British and benefactors of their liberal and "Laissez-Faire" policy. (2) Muslim revivalist movement, circa 1880-1915. (3) Anti Muslim Riots of 1915 and its impact on the community, lastly (4) the contribution of Muslims towards the attainment of political independence of Ceylon while maintaining their separate identity.

Although divided into four clear-cut divisions for the facility of study, it must be remembered that the four phases mentioned above are inter-related and inter-connected in explaining the drama of development during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century of a prominent minority community in a South Asian Colony of Britain.

It is interesting to note that the Dutch who suppressed and oppressed the Muslims during their rule in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), accepted them as loyal citizens at the tail-end of their period and even enlisted a battalion of Moorish artillery for the defence of the Dutch Forts. Accordingly, when the Dutch surrendered to the British on 15th February, 1796, there were 701 Moors [1] who surrendered with the garrison which defended the Colombo Dutch Fort. It is true that Muslims proved to be faithful and good soldiers as there was a Battalion of Moors under the British captain Martin of the Madras establishment divided into two divisions[2] One was intended for internal defence of an attack from the Kandyan provinces and the second was for general service. This battalion consisted of five hundred Moors.[3]

The British who took over from the Dutch, the maritime provinces of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) inherited a country with a plural society consisting of a Sinhalese majority and also Tamils, Dutch Burghers, Muslims and Malays. At the end of Dutch rule and the beginning of the British rule, the total population in the maritime provinces could be fairly approximated as 817,000. This enumeration is based on the population census taken in 1789 on the orders of the Dutch Governor, Van der Groaf.[4] Out of this total population in the maritime provinces, the total Muslim population has to be estimated. Basing on a proclamation issued on 02. 12. 1802, commuting of services from 12 to 8 Rix-dollars each, Van Sanden indicated that the Muslim population would have been 7,500 in early British times.[5] Prof. K. W. Goonewardena estimated it to be half a lakh i.e. 50,000, at the close of Dutch rule.[6] However, the first census carried out in 1814 revealed that there were 31,618 Muslims in the maritime provinces of Ceylon (Sri Lanka).[7] (See Appendix I, Table I) Moreover, a census of

APPENDIX I – TABLE I
Population of Ceylon in 1814

Total Population of Ceylon **—Muslims & Sinhalese**

Sinhalese	– 166,240
Muslims	– 31,618

District	Religion	Social
Colombo	Mohamadans – 6551 Buddhists – 53232 Total Population of the district – 134507 (abbreviated as T)	Moors – 6382 Sinhalese – 53232 T – 134507
Kalutara	Mohamadans – 6501 Buddhists – 12018 T – 53994	Moors – 6564 Sinhalese – 12018 T – 53994
Galle	Mohamadans – 3587 Buddhists – 57978 T – 62300	Moors – 3587 Sinhalese – 57978 T – 60030
Matale	Mohamadans – 2350 Buddhists – 41013 T – 55130	Moors – 1618 Sinhalese – 41013 T – 55730
Hambantota	Mohamadans – — Buddhists – 1332 T – 1332	Moors – — Sinhalese – 1332 T – 1332
Chilaw) Kalpitiya) Puttlam)	Statistics not available	
Batticaloa	Mohamadans – 8641 Buddhists – — T – 24126	N. A. N. A. N. A.
Trincomalee	Mohamadans – 1823 Buddhists – 654 T – 6667	Moors – 1721 Sinhalese – 675 T – 6667
Jaffna	Mohamadans – — Buddhists – — T – 103849	Moors – N. A. Sinhalese – N. A.

Wanny	Mohamadans – N. A. Buddhists – N. A. T – 11269	Moors – N. A. Sinhalese – N. A.
Mannar	Mohamadans – 3407 Buddhists – – T – 13028	Moors – 3105 Sinhalese – – T – 13028

Source: Return of the population of the maritime districts of Ceylon. 15.4 1814 (1816).

population conducted on 27. 01. 1824 and published in 1827 revealed a Muslim population of 58,270[8] in the maritime districts (See Appendix I, Table II). Accordingly, based on the 1814 and 1827 censuses and the rate of growth of the Muslim population during a decennial period from 1814 - 1824, it could be fairly estimated that the Muslim population in the maritime districts would have been between 4500 – 5000 at the beginning of the British period.

APPENDIX 1, TABLE II
Population of Ceylon in 1824 – Muslims & Sinhalese

Total Population of Ceylon – Sinhalese – 22,8579
Muslims – 58,270

District	Religion	Caste
Colombo	Mohamadans – 4847 Buddhists – 77343 Total Population of the district – 213,930 (abbreviated as T)	Moors – 13,421 Sinhalese – 77343 T – 215,360
Galle	Mohamadans – 4412 Buddhists – 62650 T – 74,552	Moors – 4375 Sinhalese – 62650 T – 74,552

Tangalle	Mohamadans – 2977 Buddhists – 76,079 T – 79,656	Moors – 2421 Sinhalese – 76,079 T – 79,656
Chilaw	Mohamadans – 7264 Buddhists – 11740 T – 29,840	Moors – N. A. Sinhalese – N. A.
Batticaloa	Mohamadans – 8288 Buddhists – — T – 27,483	Moors – 8,288 Sinhalese – — T – 27,483
Trincomalee	Mohamadans – 3245 Buddhists – 250 T – 19,158	Moors – 3062 Sinhalese – 250 T – 19,158
Jaffna	Mohamadans – 2166 Buddhists – —	Moors – 12,995 Sinhalese – — T – 123,188
Mannar	Mohamadans – 6414 Buddhists – 517 T – 22,436	Moors – 6444 Sinhalese – 517 T – 22,436
Delft Island	Mohamadans – — Buddhists – — T – 3 432	Moors – — Sinhalese – — T – 3 432

Source : Return of the population of the island of Ceylon 27.01.1824 (1827).

At the beginning of the British rule, under the East India Company Administration, it was thought fair and equitable by the British to remove certain religious intolerance practised under the Dutch rule. Accordingly, by a proclamation dated 23rd September 1799, "Liberty of conscience and the free exercise of religious worship to all the inhabitants and the freedom of worship in accordance with rules of any religion," greatly overjoyed the Moors to whom their faith was their life.

However, this proclamation did not allow the Muslims and others to establish without licence or authority, places of worship. It also prevented Muslims from establishing schools of their own.

When Ceylon (Sri Lanka) became a Crown Colony of the British Empire in 1802, the liberal laws enacted by the Imperial government in the Crown Colonies were brought into force in this island. Accordingly, by a proclamation dated 02.10.1802, Moormen and Chetties in the Colony being above 15 - 60 years of age were permitted to commute their personal services for a period of six months. This was the commutation of the system of forced labour or 'Rajakariya,' a legacy of the Dutch period, operated sometimes with severity to their advantage. This legislation was a great relief to the Muslims who were bound with forced services, which deprived them of their traditional occupation of free trade.

The Moors as middlemen and itinerant pedlars carried trade between the British maritime provinces and the Kandyan territory. The Kandyan chiefs suspected that the Muslim traders while trading in the Kandyan Provinces, collect information regarding the state of the Kandyan Kingdom. However, the immediate cause for the first Kandyan War in 1803 was the harassement of Moor traders by Pilima Talawe'ś agents while returning with goods such as salt, salt-fish, cloth, tobacco, copper, money and arecanut. Their arecanuts were confiscated and harassed by delays and ordered to deport with their cattle. As faithful allies and subjects of the British government, governor North declared war against the Kandyan Kingdom and suffered heavy losses. However, this action was to prove the impartial treatment of British subjects, especially the natives viz: Muslims who were the most faithful subjects of the British, living in their territory.

Governor North's proclamation of 23rd September 1799 preserving the laws applicable to the Muslims and the Code of Mohammadan Law effected in 1806 was a definite step towards accepting the Muslim minority as an ethnic group to be reckoned with. It was a recognition of Muslim customs, accepted by the courts through the ages. The Code of 1806 consisted of laws relating to matters of succession, Right of Inheritances, and other incidents occasioned by death and the formation and the dissolution of marriage and some of their legal consequences. Although the Muslims thought the code was defective in many respects, it remained in force for nearly a century and a quarter.

The prelude to the British invasion of Kandy in 1814 was punishment of ten Moorish cloth merchants who had gone into the Kandyan territory for purposes of trade. Although there were numerous other causes for the invasion of the Kandyan Kingdom by the British in 1814, the immediate cause was the brutal massacre of the Muslim traders by the agents of the Sinhalese King. Like in 1803, Governor Brownrigg considered the harsh

treatment meted to the Moors who were loyal British subjects as an act of aggression. Accordingly, before the complete subjugation of the whole island in 1815 under the power of the British government, Muslims were the immediate casus belli of war between the Imperial power and the independent Sinhalese kingdom.

Two years after the signing of the Kandyan convention in 1815, a great Rebellion broke out in the Kandyan provinces to overthrow the British rule from the island. At a time when all the inhabitants of the Kandyan provinces took arms against the British, the Muslims, maintained their loyalty to the British. The Moor Colony of Uva and Vellassa was a thriving community. During the time of the Rebellion of 1817–18, the Muslims proved to be very useful to the British, providing carriage bullocks to the army for the conveyance of stores from the maritime provinces. Under the Board of Commissioners, Moors had petty headman of their own race, but were like other classes, completely under the control of the Dissava and other Chiefs of the province. As Moors complained to the Governor that the Sinhalese Chiefs extorted certain articles such as salt from the Muslims without payment, and they would like to have a Muhandiram of their own race, Brownrigg appointed a Hadjee, an influential member of that community. This appointment was intended to break down the power and authority of the Sinhala Chiefs in the Uva area. Although Hadjee and other petty Moors fought on the side of the British, they were defeated by the Sinhalese. However, the rebellion in the Uva and Vellassa area was suppressed and law and order was brought into force as the Moors faithfully continued the communication with the British and informed them of the whereabouts of the pretender.

Being loyal to the British throughout the Great Rebellion of 1817–18, Moors became the greatest benefactors. They received their immediate reward in a proclamation dated 2nd March 1818, "All moors in the Kandyan provinces were excluded from the executive and judicial jurisdiction of the Kandyan chiefs, and it was arranged that all cases to which they were a party should be tried by British officers only, while the appointment of their headmen was vested in the Resident."[9] The judicial

power of the Sinhalese chiefs over other classes of inhabitants which was guaranteed by the article eight of the Kandyan Convention of 2nd March 1815[10] was completely changed by the above proclamation. The Muslims were brought under the jurisdiction of the British officials. Moreover, the proclamation of 2nd March 1818, promised the payment of full compensation to every Moor who suffered person and property during the Great Rebellion.[11] It should be noted that although the provisions of

the proclamation of 2nd March 1818 in respect of moormen were confirmed by the British government in the proclamation of 21st November 1818,[12] the British government was rather hesitant to change the judicial powers of the Singhalese chiefs over moormen. As the rebellion was suppressed successfully, they were careful in completely taking over the judicial powers vested with the Kandyan chiefs by the Kandyan Convention of 1815. Hence, the modification of the provision to appease both the Muslim and the Sinhalese communities in order to maintain peace and order in the Kandyan provinces until their power was established beyond reasonable challenge by any class of inhabitant in the colony.

The Proclamation of 21st November 1818, also further guaranteed the religious toleration to the Muslims as article sixteen of the said proclamation stipulated that protection of government was guaranteed to the peaceable exercise by all other persons of Religion which they respectively profess.[13] However, the erection of places of worship was prohibited without a due license from the governor.[14]

The British government took the Moor community into their confidence by abolishing the traditional "Uliyam" or the Capitation Tax levied on Moors. The abolition of this tax from 1st August 1830 by A Regulation No: 5 of 28th June 1830[15] greatly helped the Moors who did not like to be tied down to the land and always preferred enterprising and industrious ventures in order to make money where they could.

Although relieved from the Capitation Tax in 1830, Moors were still subject to Rajakariya where the Sinhalese headmen supervised their services. It was brought to the notice of Colebrooke that in Galle the Moormen were pressed by the Headmen and worked without pay or even the subsistence allowed to criminal prisoners and that they were subject to corporal punishment and reduced to poverty and distress by being taken from their occupations.[16] This would reveal that until Rajakariya or the compulsory services were abolished on the recommendation of Colebrooke in 1834, a section of the Moor community was subject to oppression during the first three decades of the British rule. However, the majority of Muslims were engaged in barter trade which was prosperous at that time.

The abolition of Rajakariya by Colebrooke and repealing in 1832 of a regulation passed on 3rd of February 1747 by the Dutch, prohibiting the Moors from owning houses and lands in the Fort or Pettah of Colombo made the Moors the most industrious and wealthy of the inhabitants in

the island during the British rule. The above benevolent regulations passed by the British government helped to break down the traditional economic barriers and encouraged the free economic enterprises in which Moors were engaged down the ages.

Although Colebrooke recommended the abolition of Rajakariya or compulsory services in 1833, the Imperial government made an exception with regard to the temple and devale services. Accordingly, temple and devale tenants were to continue their customary services in lieu of holding the temple and devale lands. It is interesting to note, that the Muslims (Moors) alien in race and religion were accommodated in the performance of Rajakariya to the temples and devales. The Temple Lands Commissioners observed in 1859 the "Paraveny" as well as "Maruwena" services performed by the Moors to the temples and devales.[17] Some of the "Maruwena Pangus" (transferable services) in Udunuwera were performed by the Moors who supplied a certain number of candles or gallons of oil yearly to the temple. J. F. Dickson observed in 1870 that the Muslims at Rambukkanda and Paragahadeniya villages in the Sat Korale performed transport services, such as supply of salt, fish, rice, coconuts, pumpkins, saffron etc. to the temples and devales.[18]

The performance of these customary services to the temples and devales, made John F. Dickson remark that the Muslims performed these services, without any reluctance and therefore exhibited a passion for perfect religious toleration.[19] Because of this observation of Dickson made in 1870, many scholars are of the opinion that Muslims under the British rule preferred to continue the Rajakariya services to the temples and devales, although Rajakariya was abolished and free movement of labour and enterprise was encouraged and allowed. Accordingly, one may erroneously observe that, the Muslims although given opportunities to change their social and economic conditions in an age of transition from a traditional to a modern society under the British, took a conservative attitude towards the various social and economic changes which took place during the middle of the nineteenth century. On the contrary it could be shown that when the Temple Land Commissioners visited the temples and devales from 1857 - 1865 the Muslims urged the commission to relieve them from temple and devale services and wished to hold the lands under the government.[20] The case of Moors in the village of Rambukkanda and Paragahadeniya was similar, when they urged the Temple Land Commissioners to relieve them from the Thraldom of the temple.

With the rise of capitalism as a result of investment in plantations during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the whole range of employment created in relation with free economic enterprise, created a national 'Elite' in Ceylon. Business enterprises especially in trade and in the gem trade comprised the most common avenue by which individual families advanced to national elite status. While many Moors seem to have had coffee small holdings in the hill country during the nineteenth century, only a few seem to have owned cash crop plantations nor did many enter government service or the professions. The Moors however had considerable capital resources in their hands as a result of their business and urban property interests. When the British Government relaxed the laws that Moors could own houses and lands in Colombo, they rushed to purchase the available houses and properties in and around Colombo. With Moors, Sinhalese and Tamils also invested their monies in purchasing houses and urban property as fast as possible. The profits from the ownership of plantations and urban (Colombo) property, contributed towards capital accumulation by numerous Ceylonese families from the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. Among the Moor population, Macan Markars, Wapche Marikar & his descendants owned many valuable houses and properties in Colombo. Like the other ethnic groups viz, Sinhalese and Tamils, Moors realized the importance of free enterprise and accumulation of capital to gain power and influence in the nineteenth century society in Ceylon. Accordingly, Moors while purchasing house and properties in urban Colombo, invested in plantations and also acted as leading general merchants in the new service centres, the "Bazzar towns" created due to the rise of new plantations in the hill country. The Moors pioneered the exploitation of trade in coffee, transport, contracts and supply of food and labour to the plantation sector. The newly opened Colombo – Kandy road in the Central Province gave new opportunities for the enterprising Moors to exploit the prospective business ventures.

The jewellery and gem trade itself was largely dominated by the Moors. The wealth, power and influence gained through the abovementioned economic enterprises provided the foundations for the rise of a 'Moor elite' in Ceylon, with other Sinhalese and Tamil elites formed at the same time in the country. Accordingly, Moors who were an oppressed community during the Portuguese and the Dutch periods, formed into an elite community on par with other two native communities viz. Sinhalese and Tamils who acquired the same status during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is important that this Moor elite contributed towards the upliftment of their community and also played a vital role in the struggle for political independence of Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

The ethnic composition of the principal Ceylonese Plantation owners – 1917

	No of Estates	Percentage
Sinhalese	125	75.3
Ceylon Tamils	16	9.6
Moors	08	4.8
Burghers	04	2.4
Malays	02	1.2
Colombo Chetties	06	3.6

Principal Moors holding plantations in 1917

	No. of Estates	Acreage	Tea	Coconut
Abdul Ally, M.S.M.	02	595	541	18
Abdul Cader, N.H.M.	01	554	450	–
Sinne Lebbe Marikar A.L.M.	01	527	–	420
Lebbe, H.O.	01	600	225	–
Marcan Markar, H.L.M.	01	497	–	497
Mahamadu Cassim	01	290	–	250
Seidi, Kadi	01	727	–	260
Sinne Lebbe Marikar	01	527	–	420

Source: Dr Micheal Roberts – Documents of the National Congress, Vol I, (1977) P. ixi; xivii – iii

As witnessed during the establishment of the British rule in this country at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Muslim community prospered under the benevolent measures taken by the British towards them. Although their prosperity centred round commercial activities, their political social and educational backwardness was striking at the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

The educational backwardness of the Muslims which resulted in their stagnation in the political and social fields was due to their attitude towards the Christian Missionaries and the system of education practised in these schools. The Muslim indifference to missionary and English

education was that they as a community rejected it in order to protect their religion from the possible encroachments of a foreign western culture. Second cause for this apathy towards the English Education was the trading interests of the Muslims developed at the expense of their intellectual attainments. The Muslims were mistaken that wealth alone would suffice and not the education or the educated community among them. The third factor would be that the missionary and English schools did not teach Arabic and the Koran. This was a major disincentive. One cannot blame the Muslim community for the indifference shown towards receiving an English education as they rightly concluded that the cause for conversion to Christianity was English education in missionary institutions.

Without English education it was not possible for the Muslims to take their due share in the public life of the country. Till 1889 there was no Muslim member in the legislative Council and as a result their political contribution was negligible up to the end of the nineteenth century, when compared with the other minority community, viz: Tamils. They were deprived of entering public service due to the lack of knowledge in English.

When the Muslims were in a backward state in education, society and politics during the 1880's they keenly observed the contemporary Buddhist and Hindu revivalist movements in full swing. These two movements gave a great inspiration and momentum to the revival of the Muslims. As the Buddhist movement gave birth to leaders such as Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala thero, Anagarika Dharmapala, Col. Henry Olcott, Hindus found a leader in Sri Arumuga Navalar to lead their revivalist movement. The leaders of these two movements realised that the backbone of the Christian dominated English education could be broken up only through well organised Buddhist and Hindu schools. The Muslims very well understood that leadership and leaders were necessary in a Muslim revival. They found two leaders, viz: M. C. Siddi Lebbe (1838-1898) and Arabi (Orabi) Pasha an Egyptian exile in Ceylon from 1883 - 1901.

Siddi Lebbe, a Proctor from Kandy was a pioneer in the promotion of modern education among the Muslims of Ceylon. Arabi Pasha was their guide, philosopher and friend who declared from the very beginning that in the absence of Muslim Schools and since he realised the value of an English Education he would encourage the Muslims to attend Christian missionary schools. He also felt that Muslim women should be educated.

Siddi Lebbe who was profited by an English education, with Arabi Pasha, initiated an educational movement among the Muslims. Siddi Lebbe dedicated his life to the cause of Muslim education and although he drew inspiration from Arabi Pasha, his own campaign for the upliftment of Muslim education had in fact began before the arrival of Arabi in the Island. Even before the arrival of Arabi Pasha to the island, to awaken an interest in education within the community, Siddi Lebbe established on 22nd December 1882 a Newspaper called "Muslim Neisan." In this paper he exhorted his co-religionists to awake, arise and stop not until this education and goal was reached.

He also stressed that while other communities were steadily progressing in all spheres, the Muslims were daily deteriorating in every sphere.

The establishment of the first Anglo – Mohamaden school named "Al-Madurasthul Khairiyathul Islamiah" at Maradana in November 1884, could be regarded as a commencement of the Muslim Education movement. This school was the outcome of the untiring efforts of three individuals viz: Arabi Pasha, Siddi Lebbe and A. M. Wapche Marikar.[21] Although this school was established, it lacked communal support and lapsed early into a dormant state.

The early set-back in organizing a Muslim school did not frustrate the leaders of this community. The trio mentioned above once again jointly established the Colombo Muslim Educational Society in 1891. They were joined by newly emerging Muslim Activists among whom I.L.M. Abdul Azeez (1867–1915) was to become the most prominent. At the same site of the earlier educational institution, viz: Al-Madurasathul Khairiya the Society established Zahira College in 1892. The new educational institution was modelled after the grant-in aid schools run by the Christian Missionaries, Buddhists and Hindus. Zahira remained over the years the Premier Muslim educational institution in Sri Lanka. The Muslim revivalist movement did not entirely neglect the Muslim female education. The initiative came from Siddi Lebbe who established a Muslim Girls School at Kandy. Muslim female education received special encouragement by lady Havelock, the wife of the Governor of the Colony. Although female education was encouraged, the deep rooted tradition of the isolation of the female among the Muslim resulted in slow progress in the development of female Muslim schools in the island. However, by 1894, there were four state aided Muslim schools in the island.[22] In 1887 the Government established six schools for Muslim girls in which provision was made for the instructions in Koran. The statistics given in page 12 will

show the comparative status of the development of state aided primary schools in the island.

State aided Primary Schools (1900)

Religion	No. of Schools	Students
Buddhists	142	18,700
Muslims	04	362
Hindus	45	6,560

The Muslim indifference to English education had placed them at a disadvantageous position among the other communities in the country, and as a result there were few Muslims successful in the public examinations and also their performance at the public interviews to gain Government employment was rated low. However, one cannot deny that there were no substiantial gains in education, in particular in higher education made by the Muslims at the end of the year 1911. The Muslim revivalist movement centred so much on the educational activity, one historian remarked that the word "revival" is perhaps inaccurate for what in fact was a resurgence in educational activity rather than a renaissance of the Muslim faith."[23] Thus, of the 437 boys from the Colony who were successful at the Cambridge Senior Examination between 1890 – 1906 only 06 (1.48) were Muslims, while the 1901 Census recorded the English Literary rate among the Ceylon and Indian Moors (males) as 33.29 and in 1911 it recorded 34.1%.

The revivalist movement led to a Cultural and Literary activity among the Muslims during the first decade of the twentieth century. Numerous literary and friendship societies were established during this period. In 1900 Moors Union was formed and in 1910 a powerful organisation, viz: The Muslim Young Men's Association (M.Y.M.A.) was formed with a membership of 05, but in 1910 it increased to 80. This association promoted the religious and social activities of the Muslims and communal festivals like 'Ramadhan' were to be celebrated with much pomp and glory. However, conflicting problems arising within its membership retarded the progress of the M.Y.M.A.

Literary activity among the Muslims is evident from the newspapers and journals commenced by the Muslims. Newspaper called "Muslim Neisan" was established in 1882 and later "Ceylon Muhamedan" "Ceylon Muslim Review" (1914), "Assawaap" in 1900, published in Tamil edited by Abdul

Azeez, "Muslim Guardian" in 1915, "Cresent," "Islam Mithran" made an impact on the thinking of the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

It would be pointed out that the Muslim revivalist movement had a great impact on the political consciousness among the community, and led to an organized political movement towards the representation of the Muslims in the Legislature and the attainment of independence for Ceylon from the British domination.

When the Legislative Council was set up in 1834 on the recommendation of Colebrooke, Governor Wilmot Horton delayed to nominate the unofficial members. He was obliged to appoint government servants as the Sinhalese and Tamil members, since there were no other representatives of these communities capable of taking part in debates in the English Language. In its original composition, it did not include separate Muslim representation, because for all practical purposes, Tamil member was considered their representative. In 1835 J. G. Phillipsz Panditharatne and A. Coomaraswamy Pulle were appointed to represent Sinhala and Tamil communities respectively. Until the Buddhist and Muslim revivalist movements arose in the 1880's, there was no agitation to restructure the representation in the Legislature. While the Buddhist revivalists agitated to secure Buddhists and non-goigama representation in the Legislature, the Muslim revivalists did not become a party to this agitation. However, the Kandyan Sinhalese agitated for representation of their community to the Legislative Council. The result of this agitation was the appointment of a Muslim and a Kandyan Sinhalese on 29th October 1889 to the Legislature. The Governor's nominee to represent the Muslims was M. C. Abdul Rahiman.

However, it should be noted that Ponnambalam Ramanathan's paper on the "Ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon" had ulterior motives behind it. As Abdul Azeez commented, "the object of calling the Moors Tamils in race by Ramanathan was to dissuade the British Government from appointing a Moorish member in the Council," as Ramanathan came to know that such an appointment was to be made in fairness to Muslims as a minority community, unrepresented in the Legislature.

As the sole representative in the Legislative Council, Abdul Rahiman was successful in enacting two important laws respecting his community. viz: the Mohamedan Marriage Registration Ordinance No. 8 of 1886 and No. 2 of 1888 whereby Muslim marriages would also be registered, through Lebbes who were to function as Registrars of Marriages under the

Registrar General. When the first Muslim advocate in Sri Lanka M. C. Abdul Cader was forbidden by the Chief Jusitce in 1905 to appear before the High Court with both head and feet covered, the Muslim community immediately agitated and this campaign ended with the withdrawal of the original ruling and was a victory for the Muslim activists.

The racial harmony and peace which existed during the British rule in Ceylon with few incidents during the time of Pilematalawe, whose agents harassed the Muslim traders to the Kandyan Kingdom in 1803 and 1814 was shattered as a result of the Sinhalese-Muslim riots in 1915. Muslims who were represented in the Legislative Council in 1889 never took an active part in political agitation. Unlike the Sinhalese and the Tamils, their loyalty to the British government was assured during the time of the Riots. When Turkey entered war against British in 1914, the Muslims of Sri Lanka, especially the M.Y.M.A. had pledged loyalty to the British. The Riots which broke out in 1915 is now regarded as the clash between Sinhalese and 'Coast Moors' in Ceylon, rather than the "Muslims" who were settlers from the ancient times. The origin of the "Coast Moors" is traced back to the immigrants from the South Indian quarter. The role of the Coast Moors as pawn-brokers and money lenders in particular had given rise to considerable resentment and they were viewed as unscrupulous exploiters of the Sinhalese villager and the urban dweller alike, the rising economic competition between the Sinhalese and the Muslims just before the riots in 1915 were carefully watched by the British government. However, the Gampola Perahera case, came as the ignition for the racial disturbances and the Sinhalese and the Muslims both suffered as a result of the unfortunate riots. The British government took this local incident seriously as a move to overthrow their regime from the colony and the governor took repressive measures to put down the riots. Many lives of the Sinhalese and the Muslims were lost and the government took measures through the Riot Compensation Ordinance to extract money from the Sinhalese Community.

The principal effect of the riots of 1915 was a sense and feeling of helplessness among the Muslims in Ceylon. Although the colonial government protected the Muslims during the riots, they lost confidence in the British administration. Some Muslim leaders decided to support the British government, but the majority of the Muslim community formed their associations to request and press the government for more Muslim representation in the Legislature. It is interesting to note that the Muslim associations formed after 1915, while agitating for the separate identity and the rights of the Muslim community, supported the Ceylon National

Congress which was the vanguard in the struggle for independence during the years 1919-1948. (See Appendix II)

APPENDIX II

Muslims in National Political Movements

Ceylon National Congress (Established in 1919)

Year	Name	Post	Other Affiliations
1944	A.C.Ameer	Treasurer	–
1920	T.B. Jayah	Ex-Committee member	–
1920	Ismail, M. Cassim	Do	–
1922	Cassim, Kamer	Do	–
1922	Ismail, F. Magdon	Do	–
1922	Ismail, S. N.	Do	–
1922	Jayah, T. B.	Do	–
1922	Sabar, L.M.	Do	–
1923	Cassim, Kamer	Do	–
1923	Ismail, Magdon	Do	–
1923	Ismail, S.N.	Do	–
1923	Jayah, T.B.	Do	–
1924	Cassim, Kamer	Do	Ceylon Muslim Association
1924	Cassim, Sheriff	Do	Galle Muslim Association
1924	Hassin, M. Shaffi	Do	Ceylon Muslim Association
1924	Ismail, Magdon	Do	Galle Association
1924	Jayah, T. B.	Do	–
1925	Jayah, T. B.	Do	–
1925	Hassan, Dr. Shaffi	Ex-Committee member	–
1925	Ismail, F. Magdon	"	Galle Muslim Association
1925	Ismail, S. M.	"	Ceylon Muslim Association
1925	Neeham, M. I. L. M.	"	-do-
1927	Cassim, M. Taha	"	Galle Association
1927	Ismail, M. Cassim	"	"
1933	Lebbe, A. S.	"	Yatinuwara Maha-Jana Sabh
1943	Ameer, A. C. M.	Working Committee	–

1944	Ameer, A.C.M.	Working Committee	–
1944	do	All-Ceylon Congress Committee Treasurer	–
1944	Hamid, S. A. M. Abdul	Working Committee	–
1944	Jaladeen, Z. S.	Do	–
1945	Abdul Hamid, A. A.	Do	–
1945	Abdul Hamid,S.A.M.	Working Committee	–
1945	Abdul Hamid, Y.M.N.	Do	–
1945	Akbar, M.R.T.	Do	–
1945	Salim, A.R.M.	Do	–

MEMBERS OF THE CEYLON NATIONAL CONGRESS (1937 – 43)

1939	Hadjiar, S.H.M. Abdul Cader.
1939	Muthalif, M.K. Mohamed
1940	Mitar, A. M.
1940	Mustafa, S. M.
1940	Ameer, A. C. M.
1940	Marikkar, C. A. S.
1940	Kariapper, M. M. I.
1940	Burhan, M. M.
1941	Hamed, V. Sahul.
1941	Abdul Rahaman, M. M.
1943	Sajeed, M. M.
1943	Adumahan, M. A. M.
1943	Sakarfudeen S. M. M.
1943	Raman, P. K.

Documents of the Ceylon National Congress and Nationalist politics in Ceylon, 1929 – 1950, Vol: I, (1977), P:4-204

The bitter memories and the impact of the 1915 Riots polarised the forces among Muslims and encouraged them to form various organisations in order to defend their political rights as well as to better their social and cultural backwardness.

The nomination of a Muslim representative to the Legislative Council in 1889 to represent the Moormen (Arab descent) did not satisfy them at all. The agitation for increased representation continued and the constitutional reforms of 1910 and 1920 did not bring any results to the Muslim community.

The "Moors Union' established on 29th August 1900 and 'Ceylon Muslim Association' formed in 1903 in order to uplift the social, cultural and political life of the Muslim community, contributed towards the maintenance of the separate identity of the community. Siddi Lebbe, M. C. Mohamed and I. L. M. Abdul Azeez were the pioneers of the Moor's Union. Through this Union it refuted charges made by Ramanathan about the Ethnology of moors. The younger set who formed the "Ceylon Moors' Association" in 1922 were W. M. Zaheed, S.L.H.M. Asheer, A.R.A. Razik, A. M. Fuard, M.L.M. Reyal, H. M. Macan Markar and others. A.R.A. Razik was its President and it had 200 branches over the island. The Moors Club was also organised in 1922 as a social organisation. The 'Young Muslim League' developed into "All-Ceylon Muslim League" in 1924 which agitated for (a) increased representation in the Legislature, (b) Full responsible government for Ceylon (c) Safeguard the cultural, social, economic interests of the Muslims and (d) to promote friendship in the community.

Manning Reforms increased the unofficials in the Legislative Council to 37 and 11 members to be elected on a communal basis. In this constitution, Muslims were given three communally elected seats. The stalwarts of the Muslim community, viz: N.H.M. Macan Markar, N.H.M. Abdul Cader and T. B. Jayah were elected first, second and third member respectively to represent the Muslim community. It is interesting to note that T. B. Jayah who was a member of the Ceylon National Congress and an executive Committee member of the said Congress was elected to represent the Muslim community in the Legislature.

When Donoughmore Commissioners visited Ceylon to make changes in the constitution which was in operation, the Muslim Political Association led by N. H. M. Abdul Cader, T. B. Jayah and H. M. Macan Markar gave evidence before the commission. Their main representations were to increase the number of Muslim representatives in the Legislature from 3 to 5 members, communal representation and the safeguarding of their rights from the majority community. While rejecting the proposals made by the Muslims before the commission, the Commissioners remarked on the Muslim community in the following manner, "though small in numbers, it is by reason of its commercial and trading activities an important element in the population. A considerable number of Muslims are in Colombo, while many are scattered throughout the island engaged in shop keeping and trading. In the Eastern province there are a number who are engaged in agriculture."[24] The proposals of the Donoughmore Commissioners were to enlarge the council to constitute 61 members, with 8

representing various communities and 50 representing territorial constituencies. Universal Franchise was recommended, ignoring the representations made by the minority communities and the Ceylon National Congress. When the voting took place for the acceptance of the Donoughmore Constitution, 17 members voted against the scheme and the three Muslims also voted with them. 8 Ceylon Tamils, 2 Indian Tamils; 2 Burghers and 2 Sinhalese also voted against the new constitution. Only member of the Muslim community in the former Legislative Council returned to the State Council in 1931 was H. Macan Markar. He won the Batticaloa seat. One of the champions of the Muslim cause, T. B. Jayah was defeated by A.E. Goonesinghe, the Labour leader. It is interesting to note that T. B. Jayah contested the Colombo-Central seat as a Liberal candidate. A. M. Macan Markar was made the chairman of the executive committee on Communications and Works. The Muslims were dissatisfied with the concessions granted to them by the Donoughmore Constitution. When the state council met in 1931, the election of the Speaker was taken up. W. A. de Silva proposed the name of A. F. Mollamure for the post of Speaker and it was seconded by W. T. B. Karaliadde. At this stage, when T. L. Villiers proposed the name of Sir Stewart – Schneider for the post of Speaker, it was surprising to learn that A. M. Macan Markar seconded the proposal. When the voting was taken, Mollamure received 35 votes, against 18 votes for the opponent.

When the election of 1936 was held for the State Council, none of the Muslim members won. R. M. Abdul Majeed who contested S. O. Canagaratnam for the Batticaloa seat lost. In this seat M. A. I.Kariapper, a Muslim contested a Muslim candidate and the Batticaloa seat witnessed a battle between the minority communities to enter the State Council. However, A. R. A. Razik and T. B. Jayah were nominated as Muslim representatives.

The period between 1936 and 1945 witnessed the split of the Muslim movement when 'Ceylon Moor's Association' was formed on 22.06.1938 under Sir Macan Markar and 'Ceylon Muslim League' formed on 24.07. 1938 under the leadership of Abdul Cader and T. B. Jayah. This weakened not only the Muslim agitation movement for political reforms, but also the unity of the community. The split in the Muslim political movement was evidenced when the Mannar by-election was held in 1943. M. Razik contested from the Moor's Association and T. B. Jayah from the "Muslim League." Meanwhile, a "Ceylon Moor Ladies Union" was formed on 1st August 1941 in order to uplift the education of the Muslim Ladies.

While Muslims were divided into two camps for carrying out agitation for the identity and advancement of the community, it must not be forgotten that, they supported the Ceylon National Congress in the struggle for independence. After the Tamil leaders left the Ceylon National Congress in 1921, some Tamil members worked together with the Sinhalese majority in the Ceylon National Congress. At the same time, Muslims while attached to their communal associations, were supporting the cause of the National Congress. (See Appendix II) This was a sign that the two minority communities viz, Tamils and Muslims while accepting the majority rule of the Sinhalese, worked tirelessly together for an independent, united, Sri Lanka.

On 17.07.1938, one of the greatest Muslim leaders, Sir Mohamed Macan Markar speaking at a public reception in Galle said, "We the minorities do not want equal representations with the Sinhalese, what we want is adequate representation and good government. I prefer this country to be ruled by the Sinhalese."[25]

The leaders of the Ceylon Muslim League, viz, Abdul Cader and T. B. Jayah criticised the speech of Macan Markar, but Muslims were not unanimous in rejecting Macan Markar's idea. It is clear from the statement of Macan Markar that unity among the various ethnic communities depended on the acceptance of the majority rule by the minority community and the fair and adequate representation of the minorities in the Legislature.

However, when "All-Ceylon Muslim Political Conference which united all the political divisions among the Muslims went before the Soulbury Commission on 5th February 1945, they demanded that the communal representation to be replaced to safeguard their interests, re-introduction of the Executive Committee system, balanced representation, minimum of 12 Muslim seats in a Council of 100 member and a cabinet with an appreciable number of Muslims and other minority representatives if the Committee System is replaced by the Cabinet system.[26] A fair judgement of the Muslims in 1945 was made by the Soulbury Commission. "the Moors are a thrifty and industrious people, but have for various reasons, neglected their secular education and have not in that respect kept abreast of the other communities"[27] However, at the end of the British rule and on the eve of granting independence in 1948, the position of the Muslim community, as a minority community in Sri Lanka has improved politically, culturally, economically and socially, than at the beginning of the British rule. They had their own political organisations to defend the rights, cultural organisations such as "Moors Islamic Cultural

Home" established on 22.07.1944, economic organizations such as "Ceylon Moors Chamber of Commerce"established on 22.07.1944. The Muslim population has increased from 31,618, in 1814, to 373,559 in 1946.

The population growth rate had been 48.3% from 1921-1946. The preservation of their separate identity as Muslims as evident from the statistics on inter-racial marriages from the year 1911—1945. (See Table in Appendix III). During this period, while other communities have been inter-

APPENDIX III

INTER - RACIAL MARRIAGES - (1936—1945)

Muslims	—	Nil	Nil
Sinhalese	+ Burghers	509	1221
Sinhalese	+ Europeans	24	47
Sinhalese	+ Tamils	725	1492
Tamils	+ Burghers	109	243
Tamils	+ Europeans	05	15
Burghers	+ Europeans	75	170

Source: Ceylon Ferguson Directory, 1949. P. 201

APPENDIX IV

POPULATION GROWTH OF MUSLIMS – 1871–1946

Year	Muslim Population		Growth Rate
1871	Males	–92106	
	Females	–71410	
	T – 163,516		6.79%
1881	Males	–103,804	
	Females	– 80,738	
	T – 184,542		7.2%
1891	Males	–109,170	
	Females	– 87,996	
	T – 197,166		7.0%
1901	Ceylon and Indian Moors	T–228,034	6.4%
1911	Indian Moors	– 35,927	
	Ceylon Moors	–232,949	
	T – 268,876		6.9%
1921	Ceylon Moors	–251,938	
	Indian Moors	– 33,036	
	T – 2,844,974		6.7%
1931	Ceylon Moors	–262,000	
	Indian Moors	– 35,000	
	T – 297,000		6.6%
1946	Ceylon Moors	–373,559	
	Indian Moors	– 35,624	6.6%

Source :– Censuses of Ceylon, Department of Census and Statistics.

marrying, no Muslim has intermarried. (Vide, detail statistics of Muslim free schools, University education and Public service, in appendixes V–VIII). With the formation of the "Muslim Ladies Union in 1937 on the initiative taken by Mrs. Amina Mohideen and Mrs. Nafla Mohideen, Mrs. Ghouse Mohideen, Mrs. A. R. A. Razik, Mrs. Sharkera Haniffa (Secretary) and Mrs. Ummu Naina Marikar (Treasurer), education of Muslim Ladies was launched. The prime object of this union was to establish a Muslim Ladies College. The birth of this idea was brought to limelight when Allama Yusuf Ali, a distinguished scholar from India visited Ceylon, (Sri Lanka). The Muslim Ladies College which was declared open on 1st of August 1914 was to impart a basic Islamic education. After spread of the II world war to the East, the College was closed down as the building was taken over by the military.

APPENDIX V

MUSLIM SCHOOLS IN 1948 (FREE SCHOOLS)

Hameediah Boys School	– Colombo
Zahira College	– Colombo
Muslim Ladies College	– Bambalapitiya
Zahira College	– Alutgama

Source: Ceylon Ferguson Directory – 1949

APPENDIX VI

RACIAL COMPOSITION IN THE UNIVERSITY (UNDERGRADUATES) – 1942

	Total	Percentage
Sinhalese –	519	57.4%
Tamils –	289	3.2%
Muslims –	25	2.7%

APPENDIX VII

MUSLIMS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE – (1948)

Ceylon Civil Service Class I & II –
Muslims – Nil

Judicial Service
(Class I, Grade II)
M. M. Maharof (Class I)
M. M. I. Kariapper (Class II)

Source : Ferguson Directory – 1949, P: 178–180 & 182.

APPENDIX VIII

Recipients of Civil and Military Honours (1948)

Muslims
Abdul Rahaman
A. M. A. Azeez
Mahamadu Lebbe
Kurji Marikkar Backer
Abdul Razik

After the war this College was opened once again at Fareed place, Bambalapitiya on 18th December 1946 by the Minister of Education, C. W. W. Kannangara. The initiative was taken by Mr. A. R. A. Razik to establish this college at Bambalapitiya. The policy of this ladies school was to include the curricula adopted in other schools, while catering for the special needs of the Muslim girls. There was a class for married Muslim Ladies, where cloth weaving and mat making were taught.

Although the Muslims were in a better position at the end of the British Rule, their main grievances were mostly against the Tamils. In 1935 they observed that, although the method of recruitment initially adopted was based on the recognition of local interests, it made no provision for an area which was predominantly Muslim. The Tamil D. R. Os represented the interests of the Muslims in the Eastern Province. Sir Ivor Jennings observed in 1941 that "The University was not in fact drawn equally from the whole island. Tamils are on this basis over represented and the Muslims under represented."[28] It was evident in 1938 that in the Public Service Commission, Tamil interests largely included the interests of the Muslim community as well.

The Muslim interest in the P. S. C. were safeguarded in 1948 by Sir Ratnajoti Savarimuttu.[29] In 1948 there were no Muslims in classes I & II of the Ceylon Civil Service.[30] There were two Muslims in the Judicial Service.[31] However, gradually, Muslims gained entrance to the public service and other institutions as a result of their receiving an English education during the British rule.

When the first Parliament of Independent Ceylon met, the following Muslims were in key positions, viz; Dr. T. B. Jayah was appointed the Minister of Labour and Social Services, Mr. H. S. Ismail was made the Deputy Chairman of Committees. The Muslims were successful in electing five of their members to the Parliament. viz; T. B. Jayah (2nd M. P., Colombo-Central), A. R. A. M. Aboobacker (Muttur), A. Sinne Lebbe. (Batticaloa), M. S. Kariapper (Kalmunai) and H. S. Ismail (uncontested). It is interesting to note that although the Muslims had their own political organisations such as 'Muslim Association,' "Ceylon Muslim League" during the British rule, they contested under the U. N. P. ticket to enter the first Parliament of Independent Ceylon. In the Senate, A. R. A. Razik (elected, U. N. P.) and Sir M. Macan Markar (appointed) represented the Muslim interests. Accordingly, it is no exaggeration to say that "Ceylon Muslim League" played an important part to attain full responsible government for Ceylon and also helped the formation of the U. N. P., uniting together the Ceylon National Congress, Sinhala Maha Sabha and other political organisations.

Finally, it is clear that the Muslims as a minority community under the British rule, uplifted their position from a backward, conservative group to a more developed and progressive ethnic group with a clear conscience of making independent Ceylon a happy and a prosperous place to live in harmony, with the majority community and the other minority communities as well.

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N.B. This Paper remains unrevised by the Author. Ed.

XVII

THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN A DEMOCRATIC POLITY: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA REFLECTIONS ON A THEME

K. M. de Silva

Of the 5 states of Southern Asia two have an overwhelming Muslim majority – Pakistan and Bangladesh. Of the others India has a sizeable Muslim minority but one who's influence in the country is declining. In the other two, Nepal and Sri Lanka the Muslims are a very small minority, just over 7% in the case of Sri Lanka, and much less than that in Nepal.

On the face of it Sri Lanka's Muslim minority begin the game of competitive politics with a number of formidable disadvantages, only one of which – its small size – has been referred to in our introductory paragraph. They are also geographically dispersed unlike Sri Lanka's other minority, the Tamils. The latter form a clear majority in 5 northern districts[1] and Batticaloa and have sizeable concentrations in Trincomalee and Amparai. In no district do they constitute a majority; the nearest they come to that is in the Amparai district which has a Muslim population of 40%. In most districts they are a very small minority, very often less than their national proportion.

Then again, their ethnicity is identified in terms of religion and culture, not language. Most Muslims speak the language of the district in which they live, while a great many are bilingual-speaking both Sinhalese and Tamil. Tamil has been for long the **lingua franca** of maritime trade in the Indian ocean regions, and the Muslims as a trading and sea-faring community have been exposed to the influence of that language. More importantly, the Koran has been translated into Tamil, and thus even Sinhalese-speaking Muslims have perforce to be proficeint in Tamil up to now for that reason. It is only recently that the Koran has been translated into Sinhalese.

This second point – their adaptability in regard to language – is not peculiar to the Muslims of Sri Lanka: there are several parts of India in which the Muslims have adopted the local language, and not Arabic, the language of the Koran.[2] While there are a great many Sinhalese speaking Muslims it would be true to say that not many have an easy familiarity with that language or any great proficiency in it. In a period in which controversies over language have been centrally important political issues Muslims have confronted delicate choices. Unlike the Tamils they have no great emotional commitment to the Tamil language and have demonstrated little reluctance to adopting Sinhalese as the language in which their children shall be educated. But they have also found it exceedingly difficult to abandon Tamil altogether.

Of these two disadvantages the first – the geographical dispersal of the Muslim community – has been a perennial problem because of its political implications in regard to representation in the legislature. During the debate of 8 November 1945 on the adoption of the Soulbury proposals A. R. A. Razik made pointed reference to this and urged that the Muslims be treated as a "down-trodden" community who had never been adequately represented in the national legislature. To "wipe off for good the grave injustice which the Moors had suffered politically" he pleaded for the provision of 12 seats for the Moors – as he persisted in calling the Muslim community.[3]

The Delimitation Commission of 1946 gave the Muslims much less than the 12 seats Razik asked for, but what they got was a substantial improvement on the parlous position to which they had been reduced under the Donoughmore System. Under the electoral scheme devised by the Soulbury Commissioners the Muslims were entitled to six elected seats. It was expected that they would probably get 4. In fact they got six, one of which was H. S. Ismail's uncontested victory at Puttalam, and a Muslim candidate's unexpected win at Batticaloa over a multiplicity of Tamil contestants in a seat which had a Tamil majority. In 1952 six Muslim candidates were returned to Parliament, two from the three-member Colombo Central constituency. A. R. A. Razik defeated in the Pottuvil constituency in 1947 as a UNP candidate, won in Colombo Central in 1952 as an independent.

The story of the Muslims in post-independence Sri Lanka is the story of how a small minority converted their intrinsic disadvantages into positive advantages in their struggles to strengthen their position in the Sri Lanka polity. They were helped in this quite substantially by Sri Lanka's political system in which from 1956 onwards the ruling party was defeated on six

consecutive occasions (including 1956). The result was that in Sri Lanka the Muslims were offered opportunities for political bargaining which they used to the great advantage of their community.

They had two points in their favour, and in regard to both they provided such a strong contrast to the Tamils. To take the first of these: since 1956 the mainstream Tamil leaders have regarded their community as a separate entity, separate that is from the island's political community, and occupying as they did distinct blocs of territory in which they formed a majority their politics emphasised regional autonomy based on ethnic identity and this later took a separatist or secessionist form. Their politics were perceived as a threat both to the legitimacy of majority rule and the integrity of the nation. Muslim politics offerred a complete contrast to this. They deferred to the will of the majority on most occasions (such as the ready acceptance of Sinhalese as the single national language) and were deferred to in turn (on education, for instance).

Looking back on it one feels that the Muslims had made one fundamentally important decision, and this too set them apart from the Tamils. They have no "ethnic" political parties of their own nominating candidates to seats. Neither the All Ceylon Muslim League, nor the All Ceylon Moors Association became Muslim political parties in the years after independence, while their contemporary, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress continued as a Tamil political party and was indeed the principal Tamil political organisation in the island till the mid-1950s. Muslims have sought and obtained membership, and achieved positions of influence in all the major national political parties (save the Tamil parties) and in particular the UNP and SLFP. As we have seen in my previous paper, when the UNP was formed in 1946 Muslim League joined it, and A.R.A. Razik as the Moor leader became one of its first joint Treasurers. Thus began a link with the UNP which has given that party a majority of the Muslim vote at every election since 1947. The defeat of the UNP in 1956 presented some difficulties to the Muslims because of their strong commitment to that party. But soon the SLFP as the party in power began to attract substantial Muslim support. This owed little to the first Muslim Cabinet Minister of the SLFP, C.A.S. Marikkar. The second of them Badi-ud-din Mahmud was an altogether different proposition. He was – unlike Marikkar – a man of considerable influence within the party, and he skilfully demonstrated that Cabinet office was an excellent substitute for an elected political base, and an excellent base for a leadership role in the affairs of the Muslim Community, Mahmud had two spells in Parliament, 1960 to 1965, 1970-77; on both occasions he was an appointed M.P. not an elected one.

On both he was a key figure in the SLFP, but in the second he sought to expand the political base he built by forming another political organisation, the Islamic Socialist Front which linked the SLFP with an articulate but numerically small group of Muslims to the left of the traditional SLFP supporters in that community. He was defeated soundly when he stood for election, for the first time, in 1977, and the Islamic Socialist Front did not survive his defeat.

The UNP has always had more Muslim MPs than the SLFP. Within the party Colombo-based Muslims have been the dominant element until very recently when the appointment of A.C.S. Hameed as Foreign Minister, and M. A. Bakeer Markar as Speaker marked the emergence of Muslims with a provincial base – the equivalent in the UNP of B. Mahmud the school principal from Zahira College, Gampola – to positions of prominence.

Every Cabinet since 1947 has had a Muslim in it, the present one has 3. This was not true of the Tamils. The first Cabinet after independence had 2 Tamils; there was one between 1952 and 1956, but none at all for nearly 10 years thereafter, up till 1965 when the Federal Party nominated M. Tiruchelvam to Dudley Senanayake's coalition government of 1965.

Even more remarkable is the ready acceptance of the Muslims by Sinhalese voters in electorates in which Muslims are less than a fifth of the total voting strength. It began with C.A.S. Marikkar for the SLFP, and Abdul Jabbar for the same party. While Marikkar won easily in a double member constituency (Kadugannava, 1952-59), Jabbar won in a single member constituency in which Muslims formed only 4% of the voters.[4] The most remarkable performances have been UNP Muslim candidates. Puttalam, for instance, has no Muslim majority but it has always been held by a Muslim since H. S. Ismail was returned uncontested to that seat in 1947. Or take the case of A.C.S. Hameed, presently Foreign Minister: he has often been the first of two MPs for the Akurana (now Harispattuva) seat in which the Muslims are only 17% of the voting strength. M. H. Mohammed has won Borella, an urban constituency in Colombo with less than 5% Muslim voters, and on all occasions he has faced Sinhalese opponents. And most remarkable of all is the case of M.L.M. Abusally MP for Balangoda, a seat he won against the powerful family interest of the Ratwattes. The Muslims constituted just 2.75% of the voters. In brief, the Muslims are regarded as being so clearly integrated into the Sri Lankan political community that Sinhalese vote for them on party grounds against Sinhalese opponents. In contrast not a single Tamil candidate has won a seat in a predominantly Sinhalese area since independence, except for the Indian Tamils winning seats in the plantation districts or in the

periphery of such districts. Only one Tamil has ever won a seat outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces since 1931: this was J. G. Rajakulendran, who won the Bandarawela seat in the State Council at a by-election in 1943, and Bandarawela had a very large Indian Tamil vote.

This peculiar – and sagacious – political behaviour of the Muslims in resisting the temptation to form a Muslim political party, the equivalent of the Tamil parties whether of the indigenous Tamils or the Ceylon Workers Congress and the much less important Democratic Workers Congress in the case of the Indian Tamils was noted in an article I wrote in 1974.[5] Since then a number of persons have drawn attention to it, most notably M. H. Mohammed in the course of a television interview he gave in the aftermath of the recent ethnic violence in the country. He spoke of it as a positive virtue of the Muslims, and proceeded, by implication, to draw the obvious contrast to the political behaviour of the Tamils. In practice, if not in theory, the Indian Tamils have taken a leaf from the Muslims' book. Thus in the local government elections of 1979, and in the elections to the District Development Councils in 1981, Indian Tamils belonging to the Ceylon Workers Congress contested on the UNP ticket. This arrangement broke down at the local government elections of 1983, but in the aftermath of the ethnic violence of July/August, a small group belonging to that community have called for a return to the old arrangement for the future, and in so doing they spoke of the wisdom of emulating the political behaviour of the Muslims. Indeed they urge that Indian Tamils join the major political parties in the island, and by implication that they abandon the C.W.C. and D.W.C. as political bodies because of their ethnic identity.

I

To be sure not all Muslims are happy with this state of affairs. Indeed some have argued the case for a Muslim political party independent of the existing national parties, and pursuing the sectional interests of the Muslims with single-minded commitment to Islamic principles.[6] I think that argument is based on fallacious assumptions, and that the pursuit of such a policy is fraught with perils for the Muslims. There is nothing that such a Muslim political party can do for the Muslims that they cannot do as members of national political parties. And above all else advocates of such a Muslim political party tend to ignore the very substantial gains that have accrued to the Muslims since independence.

At this point I would like to repeat what I have said in my previous paper at this conference, namely that what the Muslims have attempted to do is to safeguard, sustain and advance their distinctive cultural identity. They have sought and obtained state support for this in two distinct fields:

first, the consolidation and recognition of the personal laws of the Muslims; and secondly in education. The first of these has been dealt with in my previous paper, and here I need do no more than state that this trend has continued after independence. The provisions of the Muslim Intestate Succession and Wakfs Ordinance of 1931 relating to Muslim charitable trusts (Wakfs) was superseded by the Muslim Mosques and Charitable Trusts or Wakfs Act of 1956, while the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Ordinance 27 of 1929 was repealed by the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act 13 of 1951 (operative from 1954) which enhanced the powers of the **quazis** who were given exclusive jurisdiction in respect of marriages and divorces, and the status and mutual rights and obligations of the parties concerned. The Wakfs Act of 1956 established a separate government department with an Executive Board consisting of Muslims. The constitutions of the first and second republics preserved the personal law of the Muslims.

It was in education that the most substantial gains have been made, and this was especially so after 1956. The list of concessions won by the Muslims is quite substantial. Special government Training Colleges have been set up for the Muslims. Arabic is taught in government schools as an optional language to Muslim pupils, and taught by **maulavis** appointed by the Ministry of Education and paid by the state. Muslim children had the right (till 1974) to pursue their studies in any one of the three language media - Sinhalese, Tamil or English - a privilege no other group in the country enjoyed. In recognition of the cultural individuality of Muslims as distinct from the Tamils whose language is the home language of large numbers of Muslims a new category of government schools has been established. The usual practice had been to categorise schools on the basis of the language of instruction in them and the Muslim formed part of the Tamil - speaking school population. In the new 'Muslim' schools the sessions and vacations are determined by the special requirements of the Muslim population. The establishment and expansion of these schools, it must be emphasized, vitiates the principle of non-sectarian state education which has been the declared policy of all governments since 1960.

This sensitivity to the special Muslim identity in education began with W. Dahanayake as Minister of Education. It received greater emphasis with Badi-ud-din Mahmud who served as Minister of Education from 1960-3, and then again from 1970 to' 77. In the first period he piloted the landmark education legislation of Mrs. Bandaranaike's first government; in his second his role was more controversial especially in regard to a crucial change of policy in university admissions - and he was often seen as a special advocate of Muslim interests through his Ministry.

It would be too naive to assume that these concessions were won because of Sinhalese altruism. On the contrary one has the feeling that quite often Sinhalese politicians have used state resources to build the Muslims as a counterweight to the Tamil community in a game of checks and balances which is an intrinsic element in the process of government in a plural society.

Tamil-Muslim rivalry in Sri Lanka is a political reality, and the Muslims themselves have responded with alacrity to Sinhalese overtures to back them against the Tamils. The rivalries have been most marked in relation to education where apart from the Muslims' anxiety to break away from Tamil tutelage in schools of the Tamil medium they have successfully lobbied for more Muslim schools, and more Muslim teachers. They have pursued diametrically opposed policies on the question of university admissions. The Muslims have been among the most persistent advocates of ethnic quotas in university admissions; the Tamils stand for open competition and academic merit as the main criteria for admission to the universities.

In the mid-1950s some Muslims in the Eastern Province did link themselves with the Tamils in the latter's attempt to build an organization of the "Tamil-speaking peoples" of Sri Lanka on whose behalf the Tamil political leadership campaigned to preserve their language rights. Indeed some Muslims contested on the Federal Party ticket in 1956 and won election to Parliament.[7] But their loyalty to the Federal Party did not survive the bitter conflicts on language that broke out from the very first months of the third Parliament. Soon, the Muslims reconciled themselves to the new language policy introduced by the Bandaranaike government, and the fragile alliance of Tamils and some Eastern Province Muslims as "the Tamil-speaking peoples of the island" was shattered,, never to be put together again. Again, the Muslims have been among the most inveterate opponents of federalism and separatism, seeing in these the conferment of advantages on the Tamils which could endanger Muslim interests to a far greater extent than the country's unitary political structure. Thus, A.R.A. Razik as Sir Razik Fareed was one of the strongest opponents of the District Councils scheme which Dudley Senanayake sought to introduce between 1966 and 1968. Similarly two Muslim members of the Presidential Commission in District Development Councils, wrote a dissent against the main recommendations of that Commission in its report published in 1980.[8]

Neither the UNP nor the SLFP can take Muslim support for granted. While each has large reserves of support among the Muslims - the UNP's

support among the Muslims has traditionally been larger than the SLFPs - they are aware that the Muslim voter can tilt the balance in not less than 15 electorates in all parts of the country and often do precisely that. They have seldom hesitated to vote against a governing party if it appeared - to the Muslims - to be inconsiderate to or negligent of Muslim interests. Thus in 1965, the then governments' failure to remedy the legal deficiencies which the Supreme Court had pointed out in regard to the **quazi** courts, was a significant factor in turning large numbers of Muslims against them in the general election of that year. Then again some of that support returned to the SLFP and its allies in 1970 as part of a national trend against the UNP which was seen to have done more for the Tamils than for the Muslims.[9] But once again in 1977 the Muslims turned against the SLFP largely as a result of outbreaks of anti-Muslim rioting in several parts of the island in mid-1970s. Charges of favoured treatment of Muslims in the sphere of education appear to have kindled anti-Muslim sentiment among the Sinhalese. There were sporadic Sinhalese - Muslim clashes in various parts of the island in 1974/5, including a fracas at Gampola in the last week of 1975 in which the Minister of Education, Badi-ud-din Mahmud, and his old school Zahira College were at the centre of it. A more dangerous confrontation occurred in Puttalam in early 1976, the worst episode of ethnic violence directed against the Muslims since the riots of 1915. All this led to a serious erosion of Muslim support for the SLFP.

Briefly then, while the Muslims have not been reluctant to look upon themselves as a counter-weight to the Tamils in the communal rivalries that have been so prominent in political development in post-independence Sri Lanka, they have seldom hesitated to express their displeasure at signs of neglect of their interests, or hostility to them by a government. And Sri Lanka's electoral system has provided them with all the opportunities they needed to make this displeasure felt. Governments have changed with remarkable frequency in Sri Lanka, and the Muslim community, small though it is, have contributed mightily to these swings of the electoral pendulum. As we have seen the Muslims, in striking contrast to the Tamils, have no distinct ethnic or religious political parties of their own contesting seats to Parliament in competition with, if not in opposition to the main national political parties. Instead their political organizations work in association with and as adjuncts of the latter. The result is that the Muslim community although numerically much smaller than the Tamils have greater bargaining powers electorally than their numbers would seem to warrant.

FOOTNOTES

1. This includes the newly created Kilinochchi distirct.

2. See, Mohan V, 'The Language Pragmatism of Sri Lanka Muslims' **South Asian Studies** XIV (1 & 2) 1979 pp.106-120.

3. **Hansard** [State Council] 1945 Vol. II Columns, 7063-4.

4. This was the Galagedera seat which Jabbar won in July 1960. Marikkar had won it in March 1960.

5. de Silva, K. M. 'Hinduism and Islam in Post-Independence Sri Lanka' **CJHSS**, IV n.s (1&2) pp. 98-103.

6. M.A.M. Hussain, 'Muslims in Sri Lanka Polity' **The Muslim World League Journal**, September 1982, pp. 46-50; October 1982, pp. 53-57; November 1982, pp. 45-47; December 1982, pp. 44-48.

7. M. S. Kariappar, Kalmunai, and M. P. M. Mustapha, Pottuvil.

8. **Sessional Paper** V of 1980 **Report of the Presidential Commission on Development Councils** pp. 83-102.

9. One of the points made was that although the Muslims had voted in larger numbers for the UNP than for the SLFP, Muslim members of UNP Cabinets generally held rather unimportant portfolios such as Labour whereas Muslim Cabinet Ministers of the SLFP were entrusted with more important areas of responsibility such as Health and Education.

XVIII

MUSLIM LEADERS AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

K. M. de Silva

I

INTRODUCTION

The topic we deal with here needs to be introduced by a brief reference to that central feature of the rise of nationalism in this country, the interaction between religion and politics. This interaction, a notable trend of the late nineteenth century continued throughout the agitation for independence and indeed gathered momentum since independence, reaching its climax in the mid-1950s and early 1960s..

While the revivalist movements in Hinduism and Islam, in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century had much in common with the processes of Buddhist resurgence, there were other features which set them apart from the Buddhist experience. The Islamic revival benefited greatly from the presence of a charismatic Egyptian exiled to Sri Lanka;[1] the Hindu recovery was much more self-reliant and self-sufficient than the cognate process among the Buddhists and Sinhalese. But much more important, and this is one of the principal themes of this paper, neither the Hindu nor the Islamic recovery in Sri Lanka developed any significant political overtones of an anti-British or an anti-imperialist nature. In contrast the Buddhist recovery was never wholly without such political overtones. Two other points need special mention: there has been much less of an atmosphere of confrontation between Buddhism and Islam - and the Sinhalese and the Muslims – in recent times than between the former and Hinduism. Nevertheless and this is the third point - Buddhist - Hindu rivalry has been much less significant as a point of contention between the Sinhalese and the Tamils than ethnicity and language. In this

sense it affords a striking contrast to pre-independence India where "communalism" was often defined largely in terms of the deep-rooted hostility to each other of rival religious groups. The political aspects of the confrontation between the Sinhalese and Tamils do not concern us here: our concern is with the interaction of Islam and the Muslims in Sri Lanka and the forces of nationalism in the 20 century, up to independence.

Earlier papers read at this conference have dealt with the Muslim community in ancient times and during the centuries of Western dominance in the island. These papers have shown us how in the nineteenth century, the Muslims too confronted the challenge posed by Protestant Christianity, and how the Muslims were notable for a refusal to succumb to the pressures of Christianity. The resistance to conversion to Christianity persisted throughout the nineteenth century but the survival of Islam in Sri Lanka was secured at the expense of the social if not economic advancement of the Muslims. Much of this had to do with the Muslims' response to the schools system that developed under British rule, and in which Christain missions were a dominant influence. The education offered was not only in English but also largely Christian in content, and for that reason the Muslims were wary of it, even if it meant sacrificing the material benefits that an English education brought. This manifestation of their zeal for their ancestral faith had rather regrettable consequences, and by the third quarter of the nineteenth century the more enlightened Muslim leaders were profoundly disturbed by what they regarded as the backwardness of their community.

Thanks to the foresight and tactical skill of M. C. Siddi Lebbe a lawyer by profession and social worker by inclination the Muslim community was jolted out of its conservative seclusion and brought to the point of accepting the need for a change of outlook. Like Arumuga Navalar for the Hindus, Sidde Lebbe saw the supreme importance of education as a means to the regeneration of his community. The revitalising process initiated during this phase continued during the first half of the twentieth century.

There was little or no political content in this process in the sense of a hostility to British rule, much less any anxiety to replace it with a national regime. The process was one of self-awareness and self-realisation, and intrinsically inward looking. The Muslims in general, were well behind the Tamils and the Sinhalese in the formulation of political demands and in the pressure for constitutional reform. In this they followed the pattern set by their co-religionists in British India of the late nineteenth and early 20th century. And then came the Sinhalese - Muslim riots of 1915. These were by far the most virulent outbreak of communal violence in Sri Lanka

since the establishment of British rule. We shall deal with these riots presently, but here we need to make the point that their outcome was to strengthen the trend towards collaboration with the British which was, in any case, quite strong among Muslim leaders already.

II

THE RIOTS OF 1915 AND THEIR AFTERMATH

The riots of 1915[2] were in essence communal disturbances directed against the Muslims but more especially a section of the Muslim community called the Coast Moors, who were in the main recent immigrants from South India. The ubiquitous activities of the Coast Moors in retail trade brought them in contact with the people at indigent levels—they were reputed to be readier than their competitors to extend credit but sell at higher prices and earned them the hostility alike of the people at large, and their competitors among Sinhalese traders (mainly low country Sinhalese) who had no compunctions about exploiting religious and racial sentiments to the detriment of their well established rivals. Since the low country Sinhalese traders were a powerful driving force within the Buddhist movement, religious sentiment gave a sharp ideological focus and a cloak of respectability to sordid commercial rivalry. The rivalry became more pronounced because the Coast Moors were not only tenacious in the protection of their trading interests, but were also more vociferous than the indigenous Muslim community in the dogged and truculent assertion of their civic rights, which stemmed no doubt from their familiarity with such matters in India. This streak of obduracy and their insensitivity to traditional rites and customs of other religious groups brought them, at a time when there was a resurgence of Buddhism, inexorably into conflict with the Sinhalese Buddhist masses. The year 1915, marking as it did the centenary of the Kandyan convention, saw a notable upsurge of nationalist sentiment and a renewal of the agitation for constitutional reform.

After initially treating the riots as communal disturbances pure and simple, the British authorities in the island came to regard them as part of an organized conspiracy against the British by the Sinhalese. Although there was no evidence to suggest that the riots were anything other than communal in nature, British officials in the island chose to believe their own fanciful theory of a sinister political motive in the riots, and this belief lay behind a series of panic measures of inexplicable harshness taken against the alleged leaders of such an anti-British movement, namely the Sinhalese Buddhists, especially those associated with the temperance

movement. They were the first to be arrested and jailed notwithstanding the fact that many of them had used their influence in the restoration of order, and in protecting the lives and property of potential victims of mob violence. The list of detainees reads like a roll-call of the nationalist leaders of the future: the Senanayake brothers, F.R., D. S., and D.C., D.B. Jayatilaka, W. A. de Silva, C. Batuwantudawe, and Edmund and Dr. C. A. Hewavitharana (brothers of the well-known religious leader, the Anagarika Dharmapala). The recently established Young Lanka League also came under suspicion and its active members, of whom the youthful A. E. Goonesinhe was prominent were arrested and detained. The colonial administration seemed determined to detain any Sinhalese who had shown the slightest inclination to challenge authority in the past.[3]

The methods employed for dealing with the disturbances gravely embittered the Sinhalese against the British authorities in Sri Lanka and their sense of grievance was aggravated by the persistent refusal of the colonial authorities to investigate charges of excesses committed by the military and others during the suppression of the riots.

In the Legislative Council, Ponnambalam Ramanathan[4] rose to the defence of the Sinhalese leaders in a series of impassioned speeches notable alike for fearless condemnation of the manner in which the disturbances were suppressed and the cogently argued refutation of the conspiracy theory. He opposed both the Act of Indemnity which placed civil and military authorities beyond the reach of the law, and the Riots Damages Ordinance which imposed collective retribution in the form of a levy of compensation on all the Sinhalese residents of areas in which the riots occurred. More important, he attempted to secure the appointment of a Select Committee of the Legislative Council to inquire into complaints made against the colonial administration in Ceylon for the manner in which they put down the riots.

For two years or more Ramanathan combined his public condemnation of the excesses committed under martial law, with persistent though fruitless appeals for redress of grievances. In the meantime E. W. Perera left for England, late in 1915, in an attempt to rouse British public opinion in favour of the aggrieved Sinhalese, and to secure the appointment of a team of commissioners from Britain to inquire into the incidents connected with the riots and their suppression. For four years he (and D. B. Jayatilaka for three years) remained in Britain on this mission, but the Imperial government was in no mood to let inquiries of this nature hamper the British in the war effort.[5]

The Sinhalese political leaders and their allies among the Tamils kept up the agitation for this for a decade or more. And as a result the Muslims closed ranks and stood firmly in support of the British and one saw little here of the post-war political activism of the Muslim elite that led in India to a brief but quite enthusiastic alliance between the Indian National Congress under Gandhi, and the Muslim leadership in that country. True the Khilafat movement in India had its repercussions among the Muslims in Sri Lanka as well, but largely as a result of the 1915 riots, the local version of it neither attracted any support from the mainstream Muslim leadership nor did it develop the positively anti-British tone that it had in India, and the Sri Lankan Muslims did not turn away from their traditional policy of association with the imperial power.

Indeed, as we shall presently see, throughout the next two decades the Muslims formed part of a phalanx of minorities under Tamil leadership which accepted the need for collaboration with the British in return for the protection and consolidation of the rights of minorities as the price for accepting any significant measures of constitutional reform leading to representative government. It was not until the early and mid-1940s on the eve of the transfer of power, that the Muslims as a whole broke away from the Tamils to support the Sinhalese leaders in their political campaigns for independence.

III

RAMANATHAN'S ALLIES

It took a full generation from 1915 for Muslim politics in Sri Lanka to recover from the debilitating effects of the memories of that tragic event. The immediate effect was to inhibit any political activism that could even remotely be considered anti-British, and to strengthen those forces in Sri Lankan Muslim society which were intent on protecting the sectional interests of that community against the larger national interest, and to thwart the evolution of a distinct Muslim contribution to Sri Lankan nationalism. For a decade or more after the riots the mood of the Muslim community was a mixture of fear and suspicion of Sinhalese nationalism, and in that mood they were eagerly receptive to the blandishments of the British administration – especially of men like Governors Sir William Manning and Sir Hugh Clifford – intent on using the minorities as a brake on nationalist agitation: and also to the clever political manipulations of some of the Tamil leaders, most notably Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, who turned against his erstwhile Sinhalese allies and supporters in the early 1920s.

Thus there was little or no support from among the Muslims for the major constructive political achievement of the Sinhalese and Tamil leadership in the years 1917-9, the establishment of the Ceylon National Congress. The Muslims stood aloof, somewhat apprehensive of this new political organization. At that time the political prestige of the Tamil leaders stood at its height. Twice Ramanathan had been elected over a Sinhalese rival to the "Educated Ceylonese Electorate." His first victory in 1911, had been over a formidable opponent, Dr (later Sir) Marcus Fernando, in a hard fought election campaign, the first national election campaign in Sri Lanka. Then in 1917 he crushed his second Sinhalese opponent to a humiliating defeat. Then again, even more significant, the political programme that culminated in the establishment of the Ceylon National Congress in 1919 was led by Ramanathan's equally distinguished brother, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam whose leadership was readily acknowledged and accepted by the Sinhalese political leaders of the day. Indeed at this time the political establishment of the nationalist movement had a dual leadership in terms of ethnic origin: the Tamils achieved a status within it of equality with the numerically superior Sinhalese. So much so that the Tamils as a whole were not regarded as a minority community, but were treated as one of two majority groups, the minorities being the others of, whom the Muslims were one.

This state of affairs was too good to last. In democratic politics, which the political leadership of the island was pledged to uphold, numbers were inevitably a decisive factor. Soon numbers began to count, and when that happened, or was seen to be happening, the artificiality of the "two majority communities" concept was easily exposed.

The problem emerged within a year of the formation of the Ceylon National Congress, and with the early prospect of far-reaching constitutional change.[6] The crux of the problem was the question of representation. The Ceylon National Congress under pressure from its Sinhalese element - very much the dominant one now, numerically - insisted on territorial electorates, and an elected majority in the national legislature based on such electorates. The minorities were apprehensive of such a far-reaching change. They were accustomed to nominated representation on a communal basis, or to election through communal or special electorates. The suspicions of the minorities were exploited by men like Manning who in 1920 devised an electoral arrangement which, while conceding territorial representation to a large extent diluted it with communal electorates to suit the demands of the minorities. The pressures and counter-pressures that arose over this saw a collapse of the harmonious

relations that had existed for a decade or so between the Sinhalese and Tamil political leaderships. Disillusioned by broken pledges of Sinhalese political leaders the Tamils drifted away from them.[7] Ramanathan broke away more abruptly, and with greater conviction in his new role of minority leader, than did his brother Arunachalam. From 1921/2 onwards the Tamils began to consider themselves a minority group, and to act like one. More significantly Ramanathan led the minorities in solid formation and in collusion with Manning acted to thwart the political ambitions of the Sinhalese. The Muslims readily worked with Ramanathan to protect their interests against those of the Sinhalese majority. The acceptance of Ramanathan's leadership, and of a role of junior partner in a minorities block in the national legislature lasted till Ramanathan's death in 1930, and for some years thereafter.

This alliance was based partly on Muslim fears of Sinhalese domination coloured by the memories of 1915, and partly on a lack of self-confidence on the part of the Muslim leadership. None of their leaders could match the political skills and personal prestige of Ramanathan and so they preferred to follow him on a campaign in which, admittedly, they saw their interests coincide with those of the Tamils. Nevertheless even within the limits set by these perceptions of their needs, they took no initiatives on their own.

None of the Muslim representatives in the Legislative Council during this period were major political figures. All were conservatives in political attitude and were either somewhat diffident in expressing their views or gave silent but unswerving support to the British administration and to Ramanathan. The impression one has of them is of men who were distinctly uncomfortable in the parry and thrust of debate in the national legislature. They were solid, upright men whose integrity, personal and political, was seldom in doubt, but they were not men who could capture the imagination of the masses, and move them to stirring deeds.

W. M. A. Rahiman had served in the Legislative Council from 1900 to 1917 when N. H. M. Abdul Cader replaced him and remained a member till 1923. They were both nominated members. Abdul Cader was one of three Muslim elected to the Legislature in 1924 through a communal island-wide electorate. The others were Mohammed Macan Markar, and T. B. Jayah. Of them Jayah was the only one without a business or trading background: he was an educationist. Eventually Jayah emerged as the spokesman for Muslim interests in regard to political and constitutional reform, but that leadership came to him by default and largely because Macan Markar for all his great wealth and personal standing in his community was not a good speaker, and not given to setting out his thoughts and views in writing. Not that Jayah himself was an accomplished speaker,

but at least he had the intellectual skills to make out a coherently argued case for his community when that was called for. And even Jayah, in his days in the Legislative Council, was very much in the shadow of Ramanathan. He deferred to the latter on most constitutional and political issues.

The most striking evidence of this lies in the campaigns that were mounted in 1928 on behalf of the minorities when the Donoughmore Commissioners arrived in the island. This latter event had the immediate effect of exacerbating communal and political rivalries in the island with groups and individuals making exaggerated claims and demands in the hope of influencing the Commission's work and the political-constitutional structure they would recommend. For one thing the question of universal suffrage became an important, and divisive, issue in the island's politics. The minorities found universal suffrage just as unpalatable and indeed even more so than those Sinhalese who took a stand against it. For universal suffrage would not only democratise the electorate, but would guarantee the permanent Sinhalese domination of politics. Ramanathan came out strongly against it on behalf of the Tamils: indeed his opposition to universal suffrage was more vehement than that of the Congress leadership. The Muslim leadership were equally uneasy if not nervous about the impact of universal suffrage on the political prospects of their community.

Despite all its attractive features the Donoughmore report satisfied none of the important political groups in Sri Lanka. The minorities were bitterly hostile largely on account of its forthright condemnation of communal electorates. Like the Montagu-Chelmsford report on Indian constitutional reform the Donoughmore report made a scathing attack on communalism in politics, but unlike the former, the Donoughmore report took rejection of "communalism" to its logical conclusion by devising an electoral structure that made no concessions to "communal" interests. Minority representatives complained bitterly that a decisively significant measure of political power had been transferred to Sri Lankans with, what they regarded as, totally inadequate safeguards for protecting their interests. Nor - as we have seen - did the principle of universal suffrage make the Donoughmore proposals more palatable to the minorities. All the minority representatives, including the Muslims voted against the adoption of the Donoughmore proposals when these came up for debate in the Legislative Council. The proposals secured a very slim margin of acceptance, 19 votes to 17. Thereafter Ramanathan made a well publicised but totally fruitless visit to Whitehall to persuade the Colonial Office to reject the Donough-

more proposals. On behalf of the Muslims, T. B. Jayah sent a memorandum entitled "Muslims, and Proposed Constitutional Changes in Ceylon" to the Colonial Office, complaining that the Muslims were "aggrieved that they were forced to submit to a scheme wholly unacceptable to them".[8] Jayah too followed Ramanathan's lead in a visit to London for much the same purpose. He fared no better than his more eloquent and politically more astute senior colleague.

IV

A RE-ALIGNMENT OF FORCES

We turn now to the third part of this paper, a review of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka and the nationalist movement under the Donoughmore Constitution, 1931-1947: the political attitudes we have described in the previous section persisted for a decade or so in this phase as well.

The Muslims like the other minorities had deep misgivings about their position under the new system. Their apprehension turned to dismay when it became known that instead of the 65 constituencies recommended by the Donoughmore report there were to be only 50, and these were to be single member constituencies. For the Muslims this was a bitter blow, for when the report of the Delimitation Commission of 1930 was published it was evident that there was not one single constituency in which they had a majority position. There were only 3 (Colombo Central and 2 Eastern Province seats) in which they had a fair chance of success. As it was their worst fears were fulfilled when only one Muslim won election to the State Council, Mohammed Macan Markar who was returned by the Batticaloa South electorate. Jayah lost Colombo Central. With one nominated member (M. K. Saldin) the Muslims now had only two members in a house of 60 (50 elected 7 nominated and 3 Officers of State) where previously under the Manning constitution and its system of communal electorates they had 3 elected members.

However, there was some consolation for them in Macan Markar's election as Minister of Transport and Works. They thus had one member in the Board of Ministers. Because of the Jaffna boycott[9] 4 seats in the Northern Province were vacant, and the Tamils lost the opportunity of

getting one of their number elected to a Ministerial post. Instead there was one Indian Tamil, Perianan Sunderam,[10] who held a Ministerial post during the first State Council (1931-1935). It was to take 32 years thereafter before another member of that community won a place in the Cabinet.

There was a vacuum in the minorities leadership in the State Council. Ramanathan had died in 1930 and there was no one, neither Peri Sunderam nor any of the other elected Tamil members, to step comfortably into his shoes. Here was an opportunity for a Muslim to take the leadership but Macan Markar was clearly not the man for it. Despite his considerable business acumen and long political experience he lacked the breadth of vision and parliamentary skills for such a role. Above all he was too rigidly conservative in political outlook, and he lacked the common touch. Within the Board of Ministers, however, he together with P. Sunderam ensured that there would be no unanimity of opinion on matters of constitutional reform, so long as adequate measures were not taken to compensate the minorities for the advantages they were asked to forego. The Sinhalese politicians were insistent on the introduction of the Cabinet form of government, and were hostile to the Executive Committee system which, as both Macan Markar and Peri Sunderam knew only too well, gave the minorities same chance of securing election to a Ministerial post. At least it had given them that chance in 1931. By 1934 however, G. G. Ponnambalam was in the State Council, and he quickly took over the leadership of the minorities in their political campaigns.[11]

For the Muslims self-preservation was the keynote of their politics. Their national leadership was sober and cool-headed but timid and over cautious. What they attempted to do – and did successfully – was to safeguard, sustain and advance their distinctive cultural identity. They sought and obtained state support for this in two distinct fields: the consolidation and recognition of the personal laws of the Muslims; and in education. Here again, and more especially with regard to the former it was a trend which begun from the earliest years of British rule.

The Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Ordinance 27 of 1929 (operative from 1937) set up a system of domestic relations courts presided over by Muslim judges (quazis) and explicitly recognized the orthodox Muslim law of marriage and divorce; and the same process may be observed in respect of inheritance, in the Muslim Intestate Succession and Wakfs Ordinance of 1931. We shall turn to the question of education later in this paper.

The general election of 1936 was an unmitigated disaster for the Muslims. Not a single Muslim was elected. Without Mohammed Macan Markar his seat was lost; Jayah lost again at Colombo Central. The need for a more equitable form of representation, one that would guarantee the election of a reasonable number of Muslims became now a battle cry of the community. To compensate the Muslims for their losses, two members were nominated, Jayah himself, despite his defeat, and a newcomer who was to make a notable contribution in paving the way for a change of policy among the Muslims in relation to the nationalist movement and the transfer of power.This was A. R. A. Razik who later bacame Razik Fareed on receiving a knighthood, the son of W. M. A. Rahiman the Muslim representative in the Legislative Council from 1900 to 1917.

From this time onwards the Muslims' response to nationalism can be analysed in terms of the differences in attitude to political and social reform of T. B. Jayah and A. R. A. Razik. These differences subtle and muted at first became more pronounced in time as Razik gained greater confidence and influence both within the Muslim community and the national legislature.

Some of these differences were involved in the controversy that broke out over the terms Moor and Muslim. Which of the two was the more appropriate for the community? Those who emphasised the term Moor - Razik was one of them, thought in terms of the historical origins of the community and of its indigenous roots. The others - and this included Jayah - felt that this term was too exclusive and even elitist, and the term Muslim brought in a whole lot of other Islamic groups in the island who had come there in British times, generally small in number but economically extremely powerful. It would include also Muslims of Indian origin living in the island. More research needs to be done before we can get a clearer picture of the issues involved in this controversy. All we can do here is to draw attention to it.

By 1942 we see the beginnings of change in the Muslim attitude to the nationalist movement. In that year their ranks in the State Council were increased when Dr. M. C. M. Kaleel won a by-election to the Colombo Central seat caused by the unseating of A. E. Goonesinha.[12] The poll was small (only 25% of the total) and there were a number of Sinhalese candidates none of whom was a national figure. In this low poll Kaleel won a narrow victory. Then again Razik who had up to this time been a member of the Executive Committee of Local Administration switched over to the Education Committee on 10 March 1942 and that Committee now had two Muslim members (the other being Jayah).

This concentration of attention on education in a bid to give a boost to Muslim education brought Razik into conflict with the Tamils. This was especially so with regard to the Eastern Province where such Muslim schools as there were had mostly Tamil school teachers, or where Muslims attended Tamil schools. Razik deplored this state of affairs, and used his influence through the Executive Committee on education to build the resources of Muslim schools and to secure the appointment of more Muslim teachers. The insensitivity of the Tamils to this brought home to men like Razik the need to emphasise the Muslim identity in the national education system. Combined with this the tactless remarks of some Tamil politicians who argued that Tamils could well represent Muslim interests in the Eastern Province, brought Razik into a collision course with the Tamils.

The change of attitude was illustrated by the voting patterns in the State Council, in regard to J. R. Jayewardene's motion, debated in May 1944, on making Sinhalese the national language of Sri Lanka.[13] The difference in attitude between Razik and Jayah was clearly demonstrated on this issue. When J. R. Jayewardene first introduced his motion in 1943 there was much opposition to it on the grounds that it made no provision for Tamil. By the time the motion came up for debate in 1944 Jayewardene had agreed to amend it to include Tamil along with Sinhalese as the national languages. With the mover's consent a Tamil member, V. Nalliah, moved an amendment "that the words 'and Tamil' be added after the word 'Sinhalese' wherever the latter occurs." The amendment was debated and put to a vote on 25 May 1944. It was carried by 29 votes to 8. Jayah voted for the amendment; Razik joined 7 others in voting against it. Among those who voted against were 3 European appointed members and a Burgher who were opposed to the whole idea of Sinhalese and Tamil replacing English as the official language. But there were four Sinhalese who wanted Sinhalese as the sole national language: these were B.H. Aluvihare, A. Ratnayake, U. B. Wanninayake and Dudley Senanayake.

Razik's speech on this occasion[14] - a brief speech - is worth quoting: He said.

> "I feel that in the best interest of Lanka, my mother country, I must stand up for the motion of the honourable member for Kelaniya

[J. R. Jayewardene] ; that is that Sinhalese should be the official language of the country. However, there is not the slightest doubt that this cannot be done in a hurry in a year or two, or even in 10 years. I certainly feel that in the best interests of Lanka and her people one language will bring unity among our people. We are already divided at the present moment. Each community has its own language. But if we all take to one language, then we will not think in terms of Tamils, Moors, Sinhalese, Burghers, Malays and so on.'

If Razik staked out his own distinct territory in this speech, he joined together with Kaleel in supporting Jayah's amendment to the main motion which would have had the effect of leaving the implementation of the policy on language dependent on the recommendations of a Commission to be appointed by the house. This amendment attracted only 12 supporters. There were 25 against. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike gave Jayah's amendment strong sypport in the course of his own speech in this debate, describing it as "the wisest and best amendment"[15] but when it came to voting, he preferred to remain neutral. He was the only one to decline to vote on this amendment.[16]

Looking back on it now this debate on language policy was clearly one of the landmark events of the last years of British rule. Yet curiously enough the Sinhalese leadership – as Jane Russel's recent study of the subject shows were divided on it, while the Tamils were not. But it was equally clear that no longer could the Tamils take Muslim support for granted in their political campaigns. When G. G. Ponnambalam's vociferous campaign for balanced representation had begun in 1937 he counted on the support of the Muslims – who naturally enough were in a disgruntled mood in the aftermath of the debacle of the general election of 1936 and was encouraged by the response he evoked. This campaign – "the 50 – 50" campaign as[17] it was called – enjoyed the sympathy and support of the Muslims in its earliest phase. But that support became less enthusiastic in time, and was withdrawn by the early 1940s as the political alliance between the Tamils and the Muslims came apart over conflicting attitudes on the transfer of power,

In May 1943 the Board of Ministers had extracted a significant promise from Whitehall on the post-war constitutional status of Sri Lanka. That

pronouncement had set out the outlines of the new constitutional structure and the processes of negotiation involved in its acceptance in the island and by Whitehall – this latter through a Commission which would examine the constitutional framework drafted by the Board of Ministers in terms of the pronouncement of May 1943. Inevitably all political groups in the island turned their attention to the mechanics of the next stage in Sri Lanks's constitutional evolution, and the minorities to their status in this next phase of the passage to Dominion status.

The Ministers took it upon themselves to draft a new constitution on the basis of the limits set out in May 1943. Whitehall had insisted on approval of it by a majority of three quarters of the total members of the State Council (save the Speaker of the Assembly and the 3 Officers of State), which meant a minimum of 42 votes, an impossible task unless the minorities gave their support. Indeed this requirement of a three quarters majority was the most potent guarantee that the wishes of the minorities would be given a great deal of consideration. By the early part of 1944 the process of constitution drafting had been completed. the next step was its examination by a Commission sent here from England after the war was over, and of course the acceptance of the constitution by the State Council by the special majority mentioned earlier.

Thus by the time the debate on language policy was concluded in 1944 there had been a great change in the political situation. It was a period of great expectations. The campaign for constitutional reform received a tremendous boost when Whitehall was persuaded to advance the process of examining the Ministers' draft constitution: instead of waiting till after the war was over, it was to be done immediately. A Commission under Viscount Soulbury was appointed for this purpose and they arrived in the island at the end of 1944. The terms of reference of the Commisison proved to be quite controversial, and the Board of Ministers boycotted its formal sessions. But all the other political groups in the island now vied with each other in making claims and demands on reform of the constitution.

As usual the most vociferous were the Tamils led by G. G. Ponnambalam who now had a political organization, the Tamil Congress, of which he was the leader. For him and the Tamil Congress, this was another phase in their campaign for balanced representation, the so-called "50 – 50 campaign." But by now they were more or less on their own. They had no support at all from the Muslims. Despite the latter's anxiety to be assured of a fair share of seats in the future national legislature, they preferred to agitate on

their own, and more significantly to back the Sinhalese leadership in the latter's political campaigns.

With the Soulbury Commissioners in the island, the State Council debated a motion directing "the Ministers to introduce forthwith a Bill providing for a constitution of the recognized Dominion type for a Free Lanka." This went well beyond the limits set by the pronouncement of May 1943, and was therefore not more than a political gesture meant to convey a message to the Soulbury Commissioners. It had no chance at all of Whitehall approval.

The motion was carried by a vote of 26 for and 3 against with 6 declining to vote. All the Muslim members supported it. Jayah and Kaleel spoke in favour[18] and Razik and Kaleel voted for it. (Jayah was not present for the vote).[19] And then on 9 November 1945 came the historic vote on the acceptance of the Soulbury proposals. All the Muslim members voted in favour. Two of them, Jayah and Razik, spoke on that occasion, each of them in support of it. But their speeches were a study in contrasts as these extracts from them will show.

For Jayah the tone was set in the first few sentences of his speech.[20]

> "I am glad, Sir, that it has been stated that this is not the moment for jubilation or exultation or even for mutual recrimination. I certainly think that this is not the occasion to speak of the discomfiture of the minority communities or of the victory of the majority community."

He turned next to the mandate he had from the Ceylon Muslim League, and went on to support the Soulbury proposals, and to join in the campaign to win full Dominion Status for Sri Lanka. He spoke, as he usually did, without much fervour and, as he repeatedly stated, without a sense of exultation, or recrimination against any other group in the island.

> "As far as I am concerned, I speak with the full support of members of the Muslim community. I saw to it that the Ceylon Muslim League, representing the Muslim community of Ceylon, consulted representative Muslims in different parts of the country on the important issue before the House; and I am in a position to say that the Muslim Members of this Council have the fullest backing of the Muslim community in this Island.

When the Muslim Members of this Council decided to take a definite stand at the time the "Sri Lanka" Bill was introduced, they did so for one and for one reason only. That reason was that where the political freedom of this country was involved, they were prepared to go to any length, even to the point of sacrificing advantages and benefits as a result of such action".

Razik's tone was altogether different. He spoke with a zest and enthusiasm which was lacking in the phlegmatic contributions of T. B. Jayah. There was a greater sense of commitment to the nationalist cause which came from a clearer understanding of the forces of change at work in Sri Lankan society. But what set him apart from Jayah were the frequent criticisms he made of the Tamils in this speech, not sparing even their leader G. G. Ponnambalam who was a notable absentee at this memorable debate:[21] He began thus:

"After the five pathetic speeches made by my good Friends the hon. Member of Kankesanturai (Mr. Natesan), the hon. Member for Mannar (Mr. Tyagaraja) and others, I feel that I should say how we the Moors, have been placed in the past in spite of the treatment we received, not at the hands of the Sinhalese, but at the hands of the other communities. I say this as a solace to the Tamil community. We have been heard even without representation ! I remember the time when we, the Ceylon Moors, were told that as we speak a sort of Tamil, we can be put down as a Tamil speaking community and represented by Tamil Members ! We had to bow even to that, and very unfortunately.

I can appreciate the feelings and the thoughts that passed through the minds of my very good Friends. But I am afraid I cannot help them. If they had stood by the Sinhalese community as the Moors and I, as their representative, have done, I am sure that today would be a very happy day for them as it is for me and my community. Whatever I say with regard to the Tamil community, I am not saying in the spirit of "Vengeance is sweet". I say it as a solace to them.

We have suffered. But you are not going to suffer one-tenth of what we, Moors, have suffered. It will be remembered that in 1936 the Moors were not able to send even one representative to this Council.

Did the Tamil community help us ? No. Instead, they sent in Tamil Members to represent places like Mannar, Batticaloa South, and Trincomalee where the Moors number over 40,000 in each area. But still we treated the Tamil Members as one . . .

. . . The Moors of Ceylon number over 500,000 today, and are represented by the All-Ceylon Moors' Association which has 50-odd branch Associations in the outstations; and they entrusted to me the pleasant task of announcing to this House that they pledge their support to the resolution of the Hon. Leader under discussion today. Nothing else would at the moment give me greater pleasure than to do so, and to express my whole-hearted support of the Hon. Leader's proposals. As my community and I have always stood by him I must say that in this hour of his triumph we join hands with him in the forward march to the goal of Dominion Status to which he aspires."

Razik there proceeded to a brief survey of the links between the Moors of Sri Lanka, and the Sinhalese, emphasizing the point that

". . . the Moors of Ceylon . . . are as much dear children of Mother Lanka and as much Ceylonese as my Sinhalese brothers and sisters. The Moors and the Sinhalese have lived together for centuries in this blessed Island home of ours in amity and accord . . . Mistakes have been made in the past, but I do not want them to be repeated. That is my earnest hope; that is my fervent plea. We now live in an enlightened age in which no mundane problem is beyond human ingenuity if its solution is undertaken in a spirit of goodwill and co-operation, if freely taken up in a spirit of fellowship and understanding. Let me, therefore, offer the hand of fellowship to my Sinhalese brethren. . ."

And then he turned to the relations between his community and the Tamils.

"Now Sir, I admire my good Friend the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam). He is in England now. I admire him for the courage of his conviction, for the splendid fight he has put up for his cause, whether it was right or wrong. He, with his wonderful organizing ability, baited the Moors to join in the demand for his

famous "50 – 50" representation. Did the Moors lose faith in the Sinhalese community by doing so ? No, Sir! I want this to be remembered by the Sinhalese community in their hour of triumph ."

"At the same time, I would ask the Tamil community to understand our attitude, and not to misunderstand us—that in so solidly standing with the Sinhalese community, we only did the correct thing. It was not animosity or even malice that prevented us from joining hands with our Friend the hon. Member for Point Pedro. It was our political sagacity, if I may say so, and a sense of justice that made us stand up and fight side by side with the Sinhalese in the course of attaining Dominion Status. Let us now, Sinhalese, Tamils and Moors, march together towards the early securing of Dominion Status so as to enable Mother Lanka to be a proud Member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. . . ."

This debate on the Soulbury proposals is an appropriate point at which to conclude this paper. On that occasion the two principal Muslim political organizations, the All-Ceylon Muslim League on whose behalf Jayah spoke, and Razik's All Ceylon Moors Association formerly accepted the leadership of D. S. Senanayake, and pledged support for his political programmes for the attainment of independence. A year later Muslim groups participated in the negotiations that led to the formation of a new political party, the United National Party. Razik became one of the joint-Treasurers of the party along with J. R. Jayewardene, while Jayah, an elder statesman already was assured a leadership role within the new party. Thus when in 1947 he won Colombo Central on his third attempt, coming in second in a three member constituency, he was in effect, winning a Cabinet post. Razik's political career received a temporary but quite surprising setback when the Pottuvil seat preferred a local notable to a national Muslim figure like him.

FOOTNOTES:

1. This was Arabi Pasha, the leader of an abortive uprising against the Western powers in Egypt in 1882. He spent 19 years of his life (from 1883 to 1901) as an exile in Sri Lanka, living most of his time in Kandy.

2. The effective peak period of the riots was 28 May to 5 June. There is as yet no comprehensive monograph on the riots of 1915 and their historical significance. The best available account is 'The 1915 Riots in Ceylon A Symposium'. **Journal of Asian Studies**, XXIX (2) 1970, pp 219–266.

3. The railway workers, particularly the militant trade unionists in the locomotive workshops in Colombo were as much suspect in this respect as the Buddhist temperance leaders — 28 railway workers were arrested and at the end of June 'deported' to the Eastern Province.

4. Elected Member for the Educated Ceylonese electorate.

5. See, Fernando, P. T. M.
"The Post-Riots campaign for Justice', **Journal of Asian Studies**, XXIX (2) 1970, pp 255–266.

6. For the background of this period see, de Silva, K. M. 'The Formation and Character of the Ceylon National Congress, 1917–1919'
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7. For discussion of this see, de Silva, K. M. 'The Ceylon National Congress in Disarray, 1 1920–1 : Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam leaves the Congress,' **CJHSS** n.s, II (2) 1972, pp 97–117; and "The Ceylon National Congress in Disarray, II : The triumph of Sir William Manning, 1921–1924" **CJHSS** n.s, III (1) 1973, pp 16–33.

8. C[olonial] O[ffice] despatches series 54/900 File 73230/10 T. B. Jayah's Memorandum of 27 July 1930.

9. On the Jaffna boycott see, Russell, J. E. M. 'The Dance of the Turkey – Cock – the Jaffna Boycott of 1931' in **CJHSS**, n.s. VIII (1) pp 47–67.

10. Elected uncontested to the Hatton seat he was chosen Chairman of the Executive Committee of Labour, Industry and Commerce.

11. See, de Silva, K. M.
A History of Sri Lanka, (London, 1981)
pp, 431–435 for the background.

12. Goonesinha was unseated for election offences committed during the campaign for the Colombo North seat at the by-election held on 25 February 1942.

13. See, Russell, J. E. M.
'Language, Education and Nationalism – the Language Debate of 1944' **CJHSS'** VIII (2) pp.

14. **Hansard** [State Council] 1944 Vol I, p 812 A. R. A. Razik's speech of 25 May 1944.

15. **Idem** p. 812,
S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's speech of 25 May 1944.

16. For the voting figures see, **idem** p. 816.

17. The debate on representation during the period of the two State Councils (1931–1947) is reviewed in de Silva, K. M. 'The Minorities and Universal Suffrage', Chapter 6, in de Silva, K. M. (ed) **Universal Franchise, 1931–1981 : The Sri Lankan Experience**, (Colombo, 1981) pp 77–92.

18. **Hansard** [State Council] 1944 Vol II, pp 2635–2638, and 2671 for Jayah's speech. pp 2668–70 for Kaleel's contribution, and pp 2704–5 for Razik's.

19. **Idem** p 2707 for the voting figures.

20. **Hansard** [State Council] 1945 Vol II, Columns 7009–7013 for Jayah's speech.

21. **Idem** Columns 7059–7066 for Razik's speech.

XIX

A GUIDE TO RESEARCHERS ON THE MUSLIMS OF SRI LANKA

Fazal Dawood

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I would like to thank Mrs. D. de Silva Librarian/Documentation Officer, International Centre for Ethnic Studies for her patient help and advice in compiling this Guide. I am also grateful to Professor C. R. de Silva, Dr. S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe and Mr. A. J. M. Zaneer and ICES staff for their assistance.

INTRODUCTION

This guide consists of three parts. The first is an introduction which contains some thoughts on the research already done and the areas that need investigation. The second part is an annotated bibliography of published material on the subject. Some effort has been made to make this bibliography as comprehensive as possible and the compiler would be grateful if his attention is drawn to any items that he has missed. The third part consists of a survey of the Muslim institutions in Sri Lanka.

Work in preparing this guide revealed that there are very few in-depth studies of the history of Muslims in Sri Lanka. Several writers have attempted to investigate the history of this community but apart from isolated studies of particular periods of history there have been few works of scholarly merit. Many articles are overall surveys which repeat the same body of information.

Another factor that might be noted is that a large proportion of the publications are the work of non-Muslims. This is possibly due to the dearth of Muslim scholars in Sri Lanka and it is to be hoped that the situation would be gradually rectified with the development of greater interest within the community about its history and traditions. Among the areas that could prove rewarding are investigations into the origins of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka and a study of the role of this community in the external and internal trade of the country.

There is also hardly any published data on the political economic and social conditions of the contemporary Muslim community. This seems to be an important area that should not be neglected as Muslims in Sri Lanka live in a plural society and the growth of an inaccurate popular image such as one that depicts the Muslims as an inordinately wealthy community with great economic power and considerable political influence. At a time when there is a clamour for quotas relating to educational opportunity and employment detailed investigations are needed to see how such policies would affect the Muslims.

A positive step in aid of research on the Muslims of Sri Lanka would be the establishment of a Central Library specialising on the subject. Such a library could collect a number of valuable manuscripts and other forms of records which are currently scattered in private collections. These materials could thus, be properly catalogued and made available to the researcher. Another useful step would be the identification of areas of priority for research and funding such studies.

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KALEEL, M. C. M.
The progress of the Muslim community in Ceylon 1910– 1935.
Serendib Colombo, V, (1) 1935, pp. 10–11.

KEARNEY, R. N.
1915 riots in Ceylon–introduction,
Journal of Asian Studies, XXIX, (2) February 1970, pp. 219-22

LYE, B. W.
Muslim progress in Ceylon – our crying needs.
Ceylon Muslim Review, I (2) October 1914, pp. 26–30.

LYE, B. W.
Muslim population of Ceylon.
Muslim World New York, XV, October 1925, pp. 404–405.

MACAN MARKAR, A. H.
The plight of Ceylon Moors, Malays and other Muslims in the economic life of the community.
Moors' Islamic Cultural Home Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1944–49 Colombo 1970, pp. 83–89.

MACREDY, W. C.
The festival of Kutub Mohedin.
The Orientalist, III, 1888–89, pp. 167–168.
The annual festival which takes place in Puttalam which is held in memory of Saint Kutub Mohedin is described.

MACREDY, W. C.
The jungles of Rejavanni Pattu and the ceremony of passing through the fire.
The Orientalist, III, 1888–89, pp. 188–193.
Reference is made on how the Muslims have included this ceremony into their culture. This ceremony is practised during a fulfilment of a vow, during sickness and when remembering the death of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed (Sal). It takes place in Puttalam.

MARIKAR, A. I. L. **and others**
Glimpses from the past of the Moors of Sri Lanka, by A. I. L. Marikar, A. L. M. Lafir, (and) A. H. Macan Markar. Colombo, Moors' Islamic Cultural Home, 1976, VII, 224 p.
A collection of newspaper articles dating from 1942 dealing with the Muslims of Ceylon. Among the articles there are two by R. L. Brohier on 'Why the Peak was named after Adam' and 'The lure of Adams Peak,' and two by K. W. Goonewardene on the 'Moors in the Dutch Period' and 'Moors in the Portuguese Period.'

MARIKAR, A. I. L. **and others**
The Moors' Association: Its impact on the community, by A. I. L. Marikar, A. H. Macan Marker and A. L. M. Lafir. Colombo, 15, 1976, 400 p. Documents and other writing regarding the activities of the Moors are compiled here. It starts with a historical sketch of the All Ceylon Moors Association. This book basically traces the history of the Association and its role played to obtain concessions from governments. It also gives the proceedings of seminars and meetings organized regarding problems faced by the Muslims.

MALHOTRA, S. L.
Commercial rivalry in the Indian Ocean in ancient times.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay Branch, XXXIII, 1958, pp. 129–146.

MAUHROOF, M. M. M.
The Fakirs of Ceylon.
Islamic Review Pakistan, L. March 1962, pp. 16–17.

MAUHROOF, M. M. M.
Muhammadan remains at Talaimannar.
Ceylon Literary Register, I (29) February 1887, p. 232.

MAUROOF, Mohammed
Aspects of economy, society and religion among the Muslims of Ceylon; edited by Madan **in, Muslim communities of S. Asia,** Delhi, Vikas, 1972, pp. 66–83.

MAUROOF, Mohammed
Muslims in Sri Lanka: Historical, demographic and political aspects.
Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs, I, (2 & 3) 1981, pp. 183–193.
This article traces the historical aspect of the community with reference to the Portuguese, Dutch and British rule. The demographic aspect and its impact is also given.

McGILVARY, Dennis
Tamils and Moors: Caste and Matriclan structure in Eastern Sri Lanka.
Unpublished Ph.D thesis. University of Chicago, 1974.
The findings relate to the claims regarding the origin of the eastern Moors'. The Moorish maulanas who claim descent from the Prophet Mohammed and Bawas who claim to possess saintly qualities are described here. Also the Moorish Kuti-s share the name of Tamil Kuti-s which is due to conversion. Also reveals that when comparing matriclan organization of the Tamils with that of the Moors one notices that the Moors do not practise any obvious and unequivocal marriage exchanges between specific Kuti-s (matriclan). Also notes that there were no reports inter-marriages between Tamil and Muslims.

MENDIS, G. C.
The causes of communal conflict of Ceylon.
University of Ceylon Review, I–V, 1943–47, pp. 41–45.
Discusses the communal conflicts in the light of historical development. Passing references are made to the Muslims, and their history. The Kandyans & the Muslims feel that they have been left behind by the other communities because of their attachment to religion and because of their social conservatism.

MOHAMMED, N. K.
Ceylon – Arab relations
University Majlis, XVII, 1971–72, pp. 40–42.
The article is in Sinhalese.

MOHAN, V.
The language pragmatism of Sri Lanka Muslims
South Asian Studies, XIV (1 & 2) January-December 1979, pp. 21–33.

MOHAN, V.
Muslims of Sri Lanka: A social, economic and political profile. A monograph to be published by South Asian Studies Centre, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.
Traces the history of the Muslims from the information available from sources so as to offer a glimpse of the past. The historical background is followed by a socio-economic profile, education, language, religious practices and the dowry system. A chapter is devoted to demographic trends. A chapter on the political profile gives some insight into the political behaviour of the Muslims since legislative council day (1833). An extensive bibliography on the Muslims of Sri Lanka is annexed.

MORLEY, J. A. E.
The Arabs and the eastern trade.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malaysia Branch, XXII, 1949, pp. 172–173.

MUSAFFER, Z. D.
Wills in Mohammedan law.
Ceylon Law Student Magazine, 1931, pp. 116–121.

MUSLIM Development Fund Sri Lanka
[Colombo, P. Don Nicholas for the Times of Ceylon Ltd., 1973] (unnumbered pagination)
Articles include, A history of the Muslims of Sri Lanka by Sir Razik Fareed; The role of the Sri Lanka Muslims in the constitutional changes during the colonial era and in the struggle for independence, by M. C. M. Kaleel; The programme to solve them by M. M. Bahaudeen, Some aspects of the economic history and position of the Muslims of Sri Lanka, by A. C. L. Ameer Ali and Muslim education in Sri Lanka, by Jezeema Ismail.

NALIR, M. I. M.
Development of Islam in Sri Lanka.
Inqilaab; Muslim Majlis Jaffna Campus, I 1977, pp. 11–13.

NAWFEL, A. S. M.
Higher education problems of the Sri Lanka Muslims.
Al Inshirah; Muslim Majlis Dumbara Campus, University of Peradeniya, 1980/81 (unnumbered pagination 102) The article is in Tamil.

NELL, Andreas
Coming of the Moors of Ceylon.
Shabab-us-Sailan Colombo, I (2) July 1954, pp. 1–3.

NEVILL, Hugh
The ancient emporium of Kalah in the Empire of Zabedj as a Ceylon port and the early colonization of the island. **Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,** (Ceylon Branch) VII (24) 1881, pp. 57–84.

NEVILL, Hugh
Moderites in India.
Taprobanian, II (3) June 1887, pp. 69–70.
This article shows how the Arab word Mudariyat' became **Mude aettò** or **sea farers** which was used by the Sinhalese to describe the Arab traders.

NOORAMIN, A. R. A.
A. M. A. Azeez, Muslim leaders of Sri Lanka (1)
Bureau of Publications All Ceylon Y. M. M. A. Conference 1978 22 pages.

NOORDEEN, B. B.
Moors and the economic future.
University Majlis, XVII, 1971–72, pp. 29–33.
The article is in Tamil.

PEIRIS, Darrel
Badiudin, pioneer of a new age.
Colombo, Times of Ceylon Ltd., 1939, 47 pages.

PERERA, B. J.
The foreign trade and commerce of ancient Ceylon.
Ancient Ceylon and its Trade with India II, I (3) January 1952, pp. 192–204.
Reference is made to ascendency of the Arabs in the Indian Ocean and the invasion of India by Muslims. Also mentions a Mosque in Colombo, the tolerance of Islam by the Sinhalese, and a Moor – South Indian quarrel.

PERERA, B. J.

The foreign trade and commerce of ancient Ceylon.
The Port of Ancient Ceylon, I (2) October 1951, pp 109–119.
Reference is made to the control of the ports by Arab traders. According to **Nikaya Sangrahaya** a battle between the Moors and Alagakkonar took place here.

PERERA, B. J.
The foreign trade and commerce of ancient Ceylon.
Ancient Ceylon's Trade with the Empires of the Eastern and the Western Worlds, I (4) April 1952, pp. 301–320.
Some reference is made as it appears in the **Mahavamsa** about the Arabs during king Pandukabhaya where a piece of land was given to the Moors in Anuradhapura. Also mentions the inscriptions in Colombo, Trincomalee and Island of Puliyantivu

PHADNIS, Urmila
Political profile of the Muslim minority of Sri Lanka.
International Studies, XVIII, (1) January-March 1978, pp. 27–48.
Reveals that the Muslim population of 7% can be a critical factor in the Tamil politics

of North and Eastern provinces. Traces the note of Muslim in national politics during the British rule. A detailed statistical breakdown is given on the political profile.

PIERIS, P. E.
Side lights on the Moors.
Shabab-us-Sailan, Colombo, I (3) August 1954, p. 30–31.

PROCTOR, R. C. **Mudaliyar**
Muslims in 14th and 15th centuries
Ceylon Literary Register, I (11) November 1931, pp. 525–527.

PROCTOR, R. C. **Mudaliyar**
The invasion of Ceylon by Muslims
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, XXXI, (83) 1930, pp. 538–585.
Reference is made to the invasion of the Pandya country in the 14th century. Reference is made to the exercise of authority in the maritime region and the protection given to the princes of Ceylon by the Muslims.

RAFAI, M. R. M.
Dowry and the Moor community in Ceylon.
University Majlis, XVII, 1971–72, pp. 10–12.

RAJI, J. M. M.
The position of Muslims in government services.
University Majlis, Paradeniya, IX, 1959–60
(unnumbered pagination 82)
Argues that the lack of Muslims in government service can lead to Muslims being reduced to a position of slaves.

RAHAMAN, M. C. Abdul
76th death anniversary commemoration of Hon. M. C. Abdul Rahaman on 13th June, 1975, first Ceylon Moor member, Colombo Municipal Council and first Ceylon Municipal Magistrate, 1876, first Ceylon Moor nominated member, Ceylon Legislative Council.
Moors' Islamic Cultural Home Souvenir, III, 1970–76, pp. 19–24.
The work done by Hon. M. C. Abdul Rahaman for the upliftment of the Muslim community is given in the commemorative speech made by Sir Razeek Fareed.

RAMANATHAN, P.
The ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, X (36), 1888, pp 234–262.
Argues that during the closing years of Portuguese rule that Moors of Ceylon were Tamil Mohammedans, because of the language the Moors of Ceylon must be adjudged as Tamils. He compares the Muslims with the Kandyans who were thought to be different from the Sinhalese as late as 1866.

RAZICK, A. R. A.
Ceylon Moors' contribution to Lanka.
United National Party Independence day Souvenir Colombo 4, February 1949, pp. 15–17.

RAZICK, A. R. A.
The Tambeys of Ceylon.
Chambers Journal, LV, (781) December 1878, pp. 790–793.

RAZICK, A. R. A.
Malays in Ceylon.
Ceylon Literary Register, II, (38) April 1888, p 304.

RAZICK, A. R. A.
The Ceylon Moors.
Islamica Zeylanica, I, 1947, pp. 46–51.

RAZVI, S. A.
Islamic proselytization 7th –16th century.
Religion in South Asia; ed by G. A. Oddie, Delhi, Manohar, 1977, pp. 13–14.

RECENT Archaeological Finds
Moors' Islamic Cultural Home Silver Jubilee Souvenir III
Recent excavation in March 1976 in Hemmatagama where a tombstone with Arabic figures Hijri 135 were found. The discovery of Islamic pottery in Mannar which dates back to the 16th century are also included in the article.

REPORT of the subcommittee of the executive committee of labour, industry and commerce on the marketing and cutting of Ceylon gems.

Colombo, Government Press. 1939. 30 p. (Sessional Paper XVI of 1939).
The Muslim participation in the mining, cutting and marketing of gems is revealed here. The findings reveal that gem cutting exclusively belonged to the Muslims and the art is secretly guarded within the community.

SAMARAWEERA, Vijaya
The Muslim revivalist movement (1880–1915)
Collective Identities, Nationalisms and Protest in Sri Lanka. ed; by Michael Roberts. Colombo, Marga Publications, 1979, p. 248.
Traces the history of persecution of the Muslims by the Portuguese and Dutch on economic and religious grounds. Also describes the changes under British rule for the Muslims. Then goes on to describe the revivalism of the Muslims which got its momentum by the Buddhist and Hindu revivalist movements. Also notes the insistence on education by the then leaders like Orabi Pasha and Siddilebbe which led to the formation of the Colombo Muslim Educational Society in 1891. It notes a controversy regarding the origins and ethnicity of the Muslims of Sri Lanka. Concludes that the modernization process of the Muslims was carefully kept within the bounds of its cultural and social aspects.

SAMARAWEERA, Vijaya
Arabi Pasha in Ceylon 1883–1901.
Islamic Culture, IV, 1976, pp. 219–227.

SAID, H. M.
Ceylon Malays.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malaysia Branch, IV, (2), October 1926, pp. 266–268.

SAMAT, T. M. G.
Colombo links with the kaliphs.
Ceylon Causerie Colombo, XVIII, (12), May 1952, p. 12.

SAMEEM, M.
Madrasa education in Ceylon.
Journal of the National Education Society of Ceylon. XVII, September 1968, pp. 45–61.

SAMEEM, M.
Archeological evidence of early Arabs in Ceylon. Moors' Islamic Cultural Home 21st Anniversary Souvenir, 1965, Colombo 1966, pp. 31–38.

SHAMSADEEN, A. T.
Note on the 'Mira Kanthiri' festival of the Mohammedans.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, VII, (24), 1881, pp. 125–136.

SHAMSADEEN, A. T.
Ceremonies relating to child-birth observed by the Moors of Ceylon.
The Orientalist, III, 1888–1889, pp. 17–20.

SHAMSADEEN, A. T.
Ornaments worn bythe Moorish women of Ceylon.
The Orientalist, II, 1885–1886, pp. 152–155.
Describes the ornaments worn by Moor women eg. Kondaikkur Kondaimani (all head ornaments) ornaments worn on the nose, around the neck, upper arm, wrist, fingers, waist and feet.

SIVARASA, Ambalavanar,
Muslim participation in the political system of Sri Lanka.
Al Inshiraha; Muslim Majlis Dumbara Campus, 1980–81
(unnumbered pagination 102)
The article is in Tamil..

STUART, L. **Sir**
Ceylon and its minorities.
Indian Empire Review London, VIII, (2) February 1939 pp. 64–71.

TAMBIAH, S. J.
Ethnic representation in Ceylon's higher administrative service, 1870–1946.
University of Ceylon Review, XIII, 1955, pp. 113–133.
Discusses the relative proportion of Ceylonese ethnic groups Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils, Moors and Burghers. Statistics given here reveals that English literacy among Muslims in 1921 was only 3.2%. It also shows the number of Muslims in the legal and medical professions. The data reveals the minimal participation in the modern sector by the Moor community. Mostly they were confined to the drapers and cloth dealing vocations.

TIBBETTS, G. R.
Early Muslim traders in South East Asia.
Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan branch, XXX (1), 1957, pp. 4–10.

THE CEYLON Moors
Islamica Zeylanica, 1947, pp. 46–51.
This was reproduced from "The memorandum of Ceylon Moors Association" January 1945 and the **Royal Asiatic Society of Britain and Ireland,** I, 1945, pp. 46–51.

UWISE, M. M.
Islam and Ceylon.
Islamica Zeylanica, 1947, pp. 4–8.
Describes the presence of Muslims in Ceylon from the beginning to the present day.

VAN SANDEN, J. C.
Sonahar, A brief history of the Moors of Ceylon 1926, p. 95.
Sri Lanka National Archives 5/1 despatch of 18.02.1801 Governor to Secretary of States.

VITHIYANANDAN, C.
Moors and the Tamil language.
University Majlis, Jaffna, VI, 1955–56, pp. 73–76.
The article is in Tamil.

WEINMAN, Aubrey N.
Ibn-Batuta, 1304–1978 AD.
Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union, XVII, (4) 1928, pp. 156–162.
Details of Ibn Batuta in Abu Mohammed's travel routes and his visit to Ceylon are noted here.

WIJERATNE, Edwin **Sir.**
Islam in Ceylon.
University Majlis, Peradeniya, VI, 1955–66, pp. 16–19.
This refers to a speech given at the University of Aligarh on the 8th of November 1955 praising the Muslims for their loyalty and co-operation and traces the advancement of the Muslim community.

WILLE, G. A.
Marriage and majority of Mohammedan women.
Ceylon Law Review, VII, October 1910, pp. 223–228.

WILLIAMS, Harry
Ceylon, Pearl of the East. 2nd ed.
London, Hale Ltd., 1963, p. 181.

WILSON, A. J.
Electoral politics in a emergent state: The Ceylon General Election of May 1970.
Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 10, 38, 46, 133–5, 174–5.
Reference is made regarding the role played by Muslims in Sri Lanka politics. It analyses the importance of the Muslim vote for the major political parties.

YUSUF, S. M.
The early contacts between Islam and Buddhism.
University of Ceylon Review, XIII, (1) January 1955, pp. 1–28.

YUSUF, S. M.
Ceylon and the Arab trade in history of Ceylon,
University of Ceylon Press Board, Colombo, 1960, I, Part II, pp. 703–712.
Yusuf gives a vivid description of the trade during pre-Islamic times to Portuguese period. He also shows how the spread of Islam led to the advancement of trade in the east. He systematically describes the spread of settlements with trade and relations of Muslims with the Sinhalese kings.

PART II
SURVEY OF MUSLIM INSTITUTIONS

ALL CEYLON YOUNG MEN'S MUSLIM ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
Established – 1950
63, Sri Vajiragnana Mawatha,
Colombo 9.
Telephone: (01) 94075
Office Hours: 8.30 a.m. – 8.00 p.m.

Founded by Alhaj A. M. A. Azeez with the objectives of developing a generation of men worthy of the traditions of Islam and capable of the highest deeds to serve their community in every branch of modern life.

The "Young Muslim" is a monthly publication. A library is maintained consisting of approximately 1000 books and Muslim periodicals. In October 1979 the Y. M. M. A. organized a seminar on "Image of the Y. M. M. A.' This has an island wide network of 115 branches.

COLOMBO JANAZA AND WELFARE SOCIETY
Established – 1977
320, Old Moor Street,
Colombo 12.
Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m.

The main objective of the society is to help the poor Muslims to take Janaza and payment of allowance to Widows, Blood donations and issue of exercise books and stationery to students.

GALLE MUSLIM CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
Established – 1st April 1963
P. O. Box 59, 47,
Rampart Street, Fort,
Galle.
Telephone: (09) 2990
Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.

The Objectives are –
to instill among the youths and Muslims in general a sense of religious awakening and spiritual upliftment. The activities include organizing Religious Cultural Social and Educational programmes.

The Publications are "Young Muslim" published annually and the annual Diary.

The library consists of approximately 4000 books and 1000 periodicals and subscribers to many international journals. The membership is about 300.

ISLAMIC SECRETARIAT
27, Fareed Place,
Colombo 4.
Telephone: 84990
Office Hours: 8.00 a.m. – 7.00 p.m.

Objectives are –
1. Study of world problems.
2. Conducting classes, seminars and dramas.
3. Promoting Islamic education.
4. Promotions of relief and welfare actions.
5. Collaboration with other organizations.

There are 30 Muslim organizations housed at the secretariat. The Ceylon Muslim scholarship fund and Ceylon Baithul Mal fund are some of them. There are over 500 books and periodicals available.

MOORS' ISLAMIC CULTURAL HOME
Established – 1944
MICH Building,
27 Bristol Street, Fort,
Colombo 1.
Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.

This organization is incorporated by an Act of Parliament to promote the study of Islamic Culture and Religion. The other objectives are–

1. The research into and study of the history, customs, traditions and habits of Ceylon Moors.
2. The promotion of a spirit of fellowship among members of the Moors' Islamic Cultural Home, and the inculcation in them of the principle of Service to the Community and the Country.
3. The promotion of the Cultural, Moral, Social and Economic welfare of the Island.
4. The provision of the facilities for recreation.
5. The establishment and maintenance of a hostel for students, a guest house for visitors and restaurant for the convenience of its members and other persons approved by the Board of Trustees.
6. The construction and maintenance of a suite of rooms which are to be let for weddings and other social functions.

Every five years a Souvenir is published and an Annual Islamic Desk Diary has been published since 1945. In addition the MICH maintains a 3 storey building in Dematagoda where Technical training is given to youths. There is also a Reception hall, Montessori school and billiard saloon are found here.

The library has a collection of over 1700 rare and valuable books on Islam and other subjects related to Islam.

Examples of Seminars that have been organized by the MICH—

1.11.67	The plight of the Ceylon Moors, Malays and other Muslims.
22.10.70	"Connection of Concord' to promote inter religion.

The MICH has 395 ordinary members and 256 associate members.

MUSLIM LADIES ARABIC COLLEGE
Established – 1959
Kal Eliya.
Telephone: 0365 – 301
Office Hours: 8.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

This is a Arabic school which promotes Arabic and Islamic studies. The students who successfully complete the course become thorough in Islamic principles and are known as "alimas/Moulavias". It maintains a library of approximately 2000 books and periodicals. The student population is about 700.

MUSLIM LIBRARY
Established – 1932
55, Justice Akbar Mawatha,
Colombo 2.
Office Hours: 7.30 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.

Objectives are –
to promote the Religion, Spiritual and Cultural life of the Muslims.

The library can be used by any member of the public without any charge.

A monthly publication called the "Star and Crescent" is published. It has a valuable collection of over 1200 books on Islamic ideology and many periodicals and journals.

MUSLIM WELFARE ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA
209, New Moor Street,
Colombo 12.
Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

Objectives are –
1. To ameliorate the conditions of the poverty stricken Muslims.
2. To assist the handicapped Muslims in the field of education.
3. To promote better understanding among members.
4. To assist the poor and needy Muslims in marriages.

A reading library is maintained with newspapers in all three languages. The association has 123 members.

MUSLIM WOMEN'S SOCIAL LEAGUE
Established – 1958
49, Jawatte Road,
Colombo 5.

Telephone: (01) 588797
Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

The objective is to strive and work for the upliftment and welfare of women and children in the field of health, education, cultural, social and economic areas. It has about 325 members.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF Y.M.M.A.'S OF SRI LANKA
323, Jumma Masjid Road,
Colombo 10.

Telephone: (01) 597219, 92312
Office Hours: 8.00 a.m. – 8.00 p.m.

Objectives are –

1. To aim at developing a generation of men worthy of highest traditions of Islam and capable of the highest deeds to serve their country in every branch of modern life.
2. To promote the cause of education generally and of Adult education in particular.
3. To arrange inter Young Men's Muslim Association debates, oratorical contests, games and other activities
4. To foster inter-communal amity.
5. To arrange sports meets, picnics, and educational tours in Ceylon and abroad.

The monthly publication "IQRA" is published in all three languages. The library consists of 300 books and subscribes to 30 periodicals. Has 55 branches islanwide with 5000 members.

SIR RAZIK FAREED FOUNDATION
Established – 1980
25, St., Hill Street,
Colombo 12.

Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Objectives are –

1. To foster and encourage the teaching of Arabic among Sri Lankan Muslims.
2. To construct and maintain a building to be used for weddings and other functions and utilize the income therefrom for the relief of poverty.
3. To foster and promote education by founding scholarships.

4. To foster, promote and encourage the study of the history, customs, traditions, and habits of the Sri Lankan Moors.
5. To establish welfare facilities for the deaf, dumb and blind Muslims and a home for Muslim elders.

SRI LANKA ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE MOVEMENT
Established – 1982
12 Alexandra Road,
Colombo 6.

Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Objectives are –
1. To foster among Muslims of Sri Lanka a spirit of Islamic brotherhood fellowship and unity.
2. To continue, foster and promote an atmosphere of co-existence with other communities whilst safeguarding the interests of the Muslim community.
3. To study the problems of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka in the religious, educational, social and economic spheres and to offer constructive suggestions and assistance.
4. To provide assistance to necessitous and deserving Muslim students and enable them to pursue their studies in Sri Lanka or abroad.
5. To foster and promote the study of Islamic culture and religion.

THE CEYLON MOOR LADIES' UNION
Established – 25th March 1936
8, Balapokuna Road,
Colombo 6.

Telephone: 554109
Office Hours: 8.00 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

This union was founded by members of the premier Muslim Girls school in Colombo – Muslim Ladies College, Colombo 4. The union inaugurated the Muslim Girls Orphanage at 8, Balapokuna Road, Colombo 6. This orphanage consists of 30 orphans and is registered with the Social Service Department.

YOUNG MUSLIM WOMEN'S LEAGUE
Established – 1973
66, Park Street,
Colombo 2.

Office Hours: 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

The objectives are to help the Muslim women in religious and socio-cultural aspects.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Dr. M. A. M. Shukri, currently the Director of the Jamiah Naleemiah, Beruwela, Sri Lanka, entered the University of Ceylon, from the premier Muslim Institution – Zahira College, Colombo. Reading for a special course of studies in Arabic, he obtained a First Class Honours in the subject and was awarded the Commonwealth Scholarship – 1973, to pursue his post-graduate studies at the University of Edinburgh (U. K.). At this Institution, he was fortunate to have been among the alumni of one of the distinguished Islamologists, Prof. W. Montgomery Watt. Shukri was conferred the Doctorate in Philosophy, on his penetrative study of 'Qūt al-Qulūb', an esoteric mystical Risala of Abu Talib al-Makki of the 4th century A. H.

He has lectured at the Universities of Peradeniya and Kelaniya and was the Head of the Department of Arabic at the latter. Despite the administrative work entailed by his present position as Director of the Institute of Jamiah Naleemiah, his persistent research in Arabic, Quranic exegesis and the Cultural History of Islam have yielded several treatises of merit, most of which have been either published or presented at many International gatherings of the Muslim World. Present work was edited by him in his capacity as Director of Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Research. He edited some of the Speeches of Moulana Abdul Hasan Ali Nadwi. Further, he is the author of (i) Islam and Education (English) 1979; (ii) Al-Quran – Its Doctrine and Way of Life (Tamil) 1981; (iii) Sufis in Defence of The Faith (Tamil) 1984.

He was a Member of the Educational Reform Committee apointed by the Government of Sri Lanka; Member of the Sri Lanka National Library Services Board; was a Member of the Literary Panel of the Sri Lanka Sahitya Mandalaya; Member of the Board of Trustees of the Muslim Scholarship Fund; and this year (1985) was appointed Director General of the Islamic Secretariat. He is also a member of the Sri Lanka National Commission for Unesco. Dr. Shukri also finds the time to render his services to the Community, as the Executive President of The Muslim Renaissance Movement – which is exclusively directed towards the educational regeneration of the Muslims of this country by providing tuition through a network of centres, offering guidance and funding deserving scholars at the pre-University and University levels.

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Muslims of Sri Lanka-Dr.Shukri
24.03.2015